Future

SCORPIONS
THEY THREATENED TO RETIRE. THEY DIDN'T

MOTÖRHEAD
ACE OF SPADES THE MAKING OF A CLASSIC

T.REX
THE FRACTIOUS BIRTH OF *TANX* AND *SLIDER*

MICHAEL MONROE
"HANOI WERE JUST A ROCK BAND THAT WANTED TO LOOK GOOD"

★CLASSIC★ ROCK

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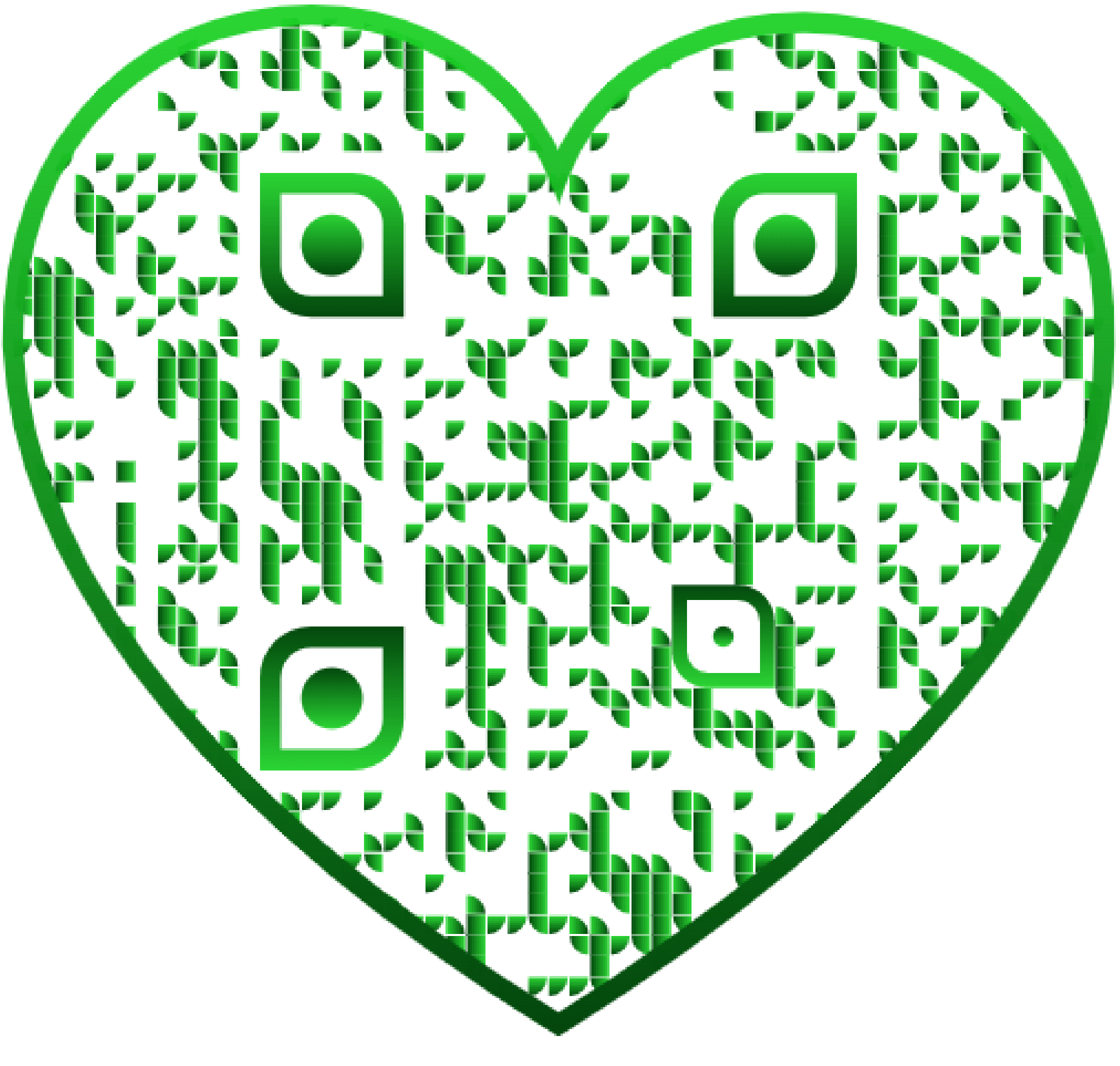
HUGHES, BONAMASSA, BONHAM AND SHERINIAN WEIGH IN!

Five years ago it was over. Now they're just getting started

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION

CONFESSIONS OF A REUNITED SUPERGROUP



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T.Rex
"I think every good rock band has the spirit of T.Rex in their DNA."

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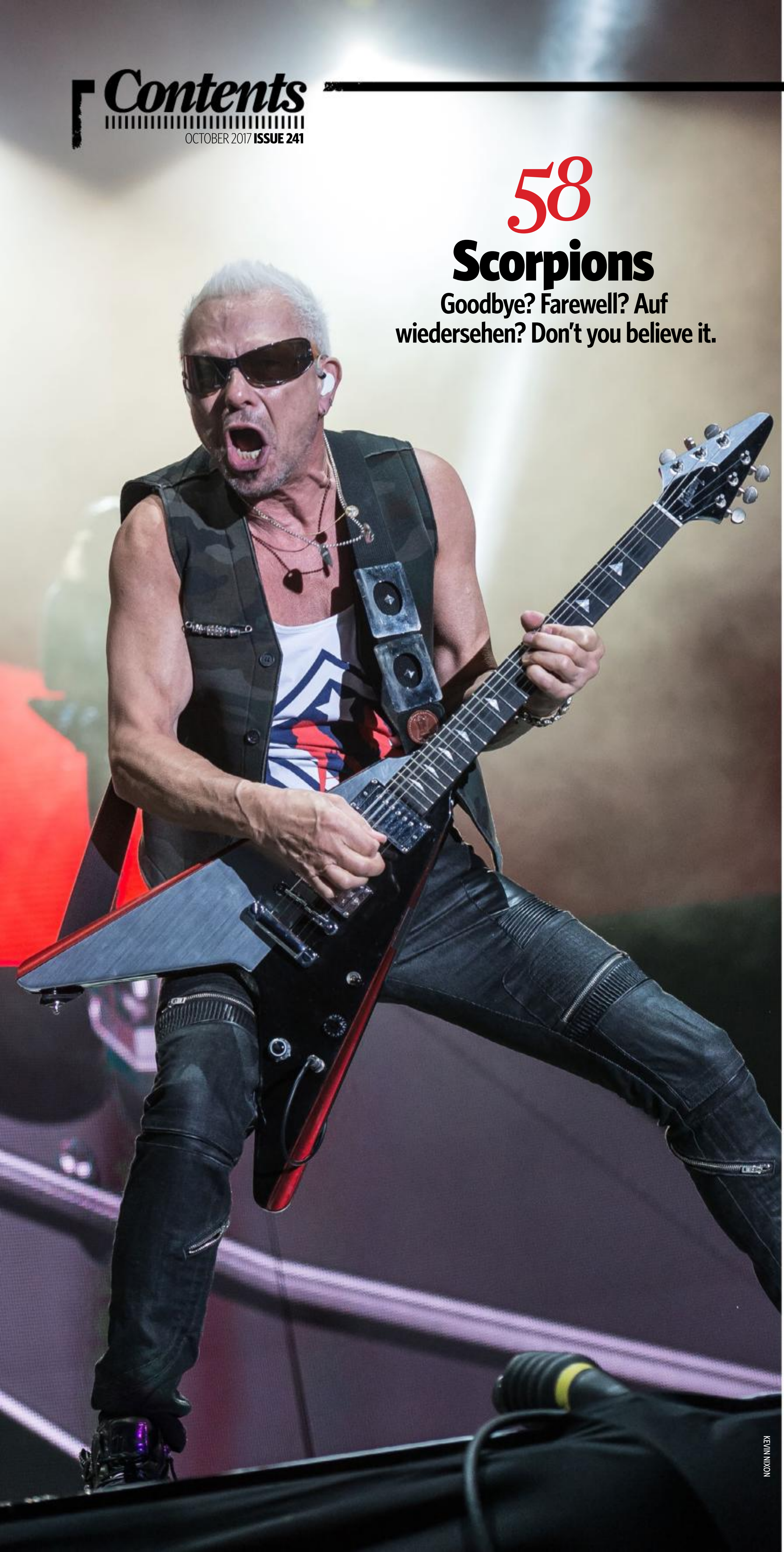

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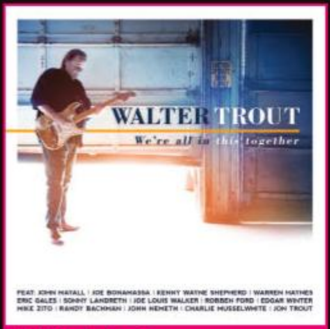
hmv RECOMMENDED

discover the best new releases



Walter Trout
We're All In This Together
out now on CD & vinyl
Features contributions from a number of artists including John Mayall, Joe Bonamassa, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Robben Ford.

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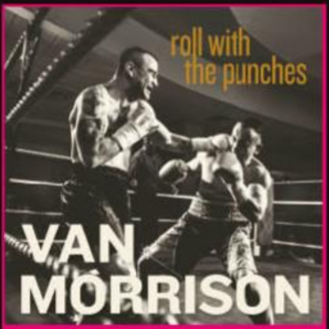
Carole King
Tapestry: Live In Hyde Park
out 15 September on CD/DVD
Features the full concert on CD and DVD while the DVD also includes recollections from Carole about the making of Tapestry. Also on CD/Blu-ray.

GUN
Favourite Pleasures
out 15 September on CD & vinyl
Favourite Pleasures, the seventh studio album from the Scottish rockers finds the band returning to their rockier roots.

SIMO
Rise & Shine
out 15 September on CD & vinyl
This brand new album from the Nashville trio is a deep mix of soul, blues, rock and scorching guitar jams.

Black Country Communion
BCCIV
out 22 September on CD & vinyl
Glenn Hughes, Joe Bonamassa, Derek Sherinian and Jason Bonham return with their highly anticipated fourth album.



Van Morrison
Roll With The Punches
out 22 September on CD & vinyl
Includes covers of rhythm & blues classics by Sam Cooke, Bo Diddley and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, as well as newly recorded original songs.

Wolves In The Throne Room
Thrice Woven
out 22 September on CD & vinyl
WITTR re-imagine black metal as an ode to rain storms, wood smoke and the wild energies of the Pacific Northwest. Featuring Neurosis' Steve Von Till.

Black Stone Cherry
Black To Blues
out 29 September on CD & vinyl
On this six track EP, Black Stone Cherry pay tribute to their blues roots and heroes including Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters.

Kadavar
Rough Times
out 29 September on CD
German psych-rockers delight by cooking their Sabbathian blues in Krautrock on album number four.

Monolord
Rust
out 29 September on CD & vinyl
The Swedish doom royalty's third full-length truly exemplifies why some refer to Monolord as the "Nirvana of doom".

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Watch him sing Bark At The Moon

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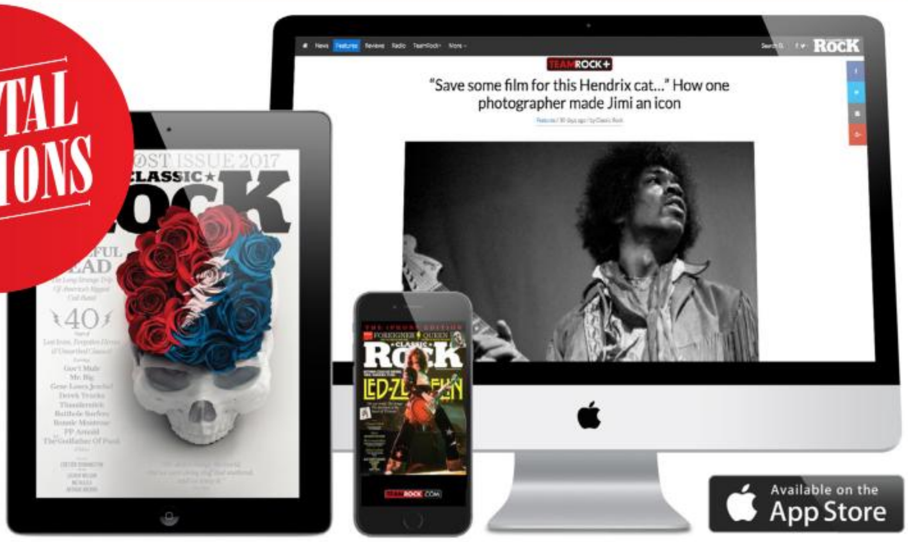

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It sounds like it could be the start of a very odd joke: what do you get when the world's hottest contemporary blues guitar slinger, The Voice Of Rock(TM), the son of Led Zep's drummer and the former keyboard player with one of progressive metal's biggest bands get together? But it's no joke. That exact scenario played out in 2009 when Joe Bonamassa, Glenn Hughes, Jason Bonham and Derek Sherinian formed Black Country Communion – and a new, bona fide classic rock supergroup was born.

Everything was great – killer riffs, big songs, three great albums, fantastic live shows, the Breakthrough Award at the 2011 Classic Rock Roll Of Honour. But then, as these things often do, everything fell apart, seemingly in a whole load of acrimony. Until now. In one of those fairy tale endings, the BCC guys have reunited and are poised to release their fourth album. We collared all four band members to get the unvarnished truth about what *really* went down.

Oh, and if you haven't yet been charmed by BCC's high-voltage rock'n'roll, do yourself a favour and get acquainted with it by giving our exclusive *The Story So Far...* 'greatest hits' cover disc a spin. It's the perfect introduction. And it really is time you caught up...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

THE COVER: BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION BY NEIL ZLOZOWER

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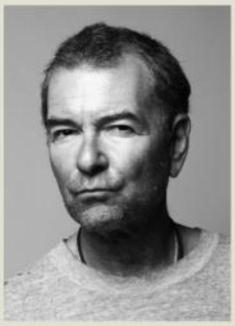
This month's contributors

JOE BOSSO
Joe (who talked to BCC for us this month) grew up idolising rock stars, and over the years he's interviewed most of his heroes – not too shabby for a guy whose eighth-grade English teacher once said to him: "I hope you don't plan on writing for a living." Joe lives in New Jersey with his wife and family and an adorable Bichon Frise called Harry.

CHRIS ROBERTS
This issue Chris Roberts talks to Tony Visconti about the T.Rex albums *Tanx* and *The Slider*, which he first bought off a lad in his school playground (Roberts, that is, not Visconti). Since then he's jammed on a cover of *The Slider* with members of Pixies and published 14 books, the latest of which, a Beyonce biography, is published this month.



NEIL ZLOZOWER
Zloz has been at this rock'n'roll photography lark for a long time now. Over his illustrious career he has shot AC/DC to ZZ Top and pretty much everybody in-between. This month he shot the reunited Black Country Communion for *Classic Rock*'s exclusive cover and feature (see page 30). You can see more of Zloz's work at www.zloz.com

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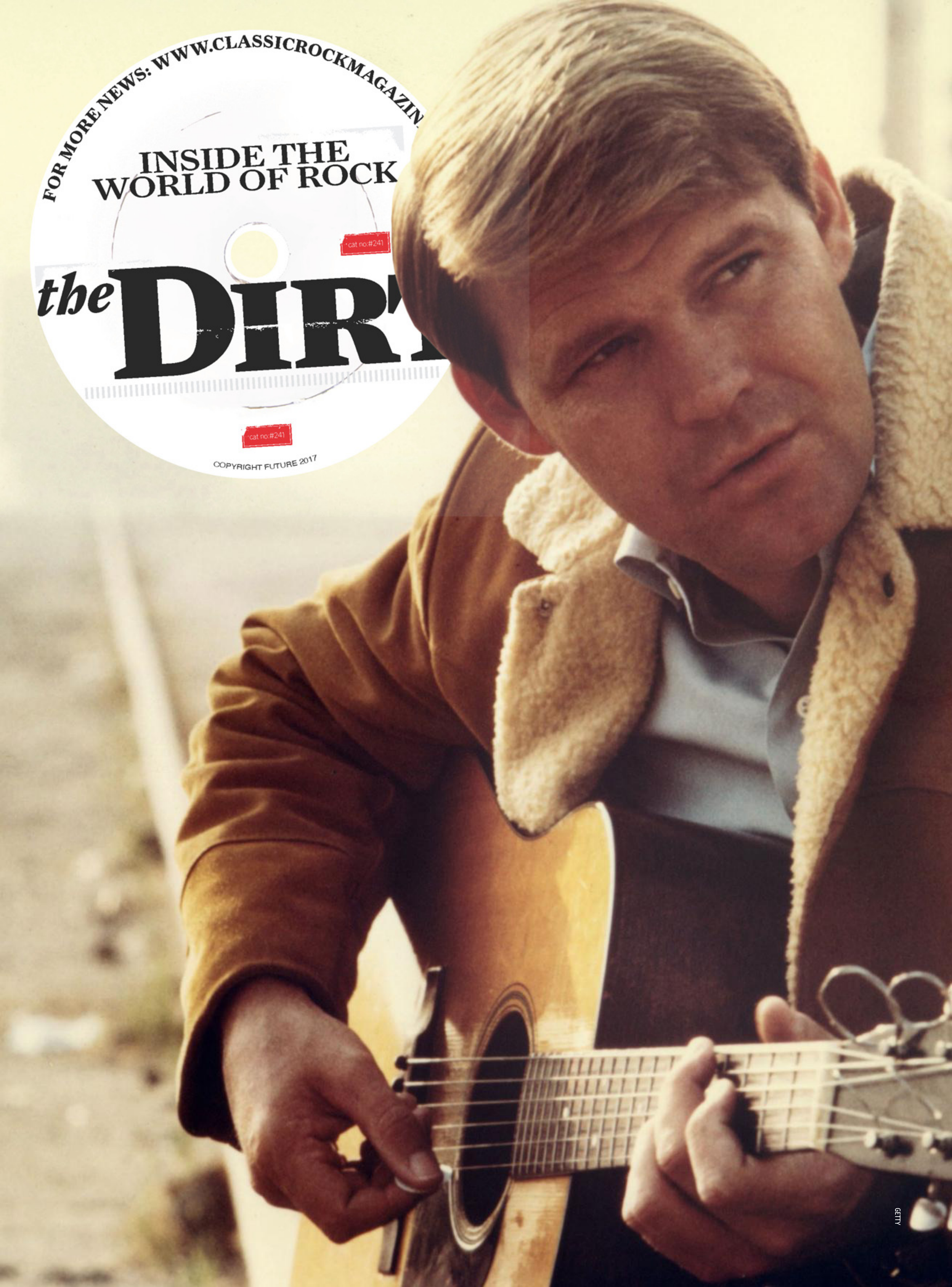

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Glen Campbell

April 22, 1936 – August 8, 2017

In 1964, Capitol Records released *The Astounding 12-String Guitar Of Glen Campbell*, an album of slick instrumental folk featuring covers of Bob Dylan's *Blowin' In The Wind* and Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land*. In the sleeve notes, disc jockey Hugh Cherry – the man who later introduced Johnny Cash on stage at his legendary Folsom Prison shows – makes a prediction: "Glen Campbell has recently gained great fame as an instrumentalist," he says, "but it is the opinion of this writer that Glen will ultimately gain equal fame and acceptance as a vocalist of rare interpretive ability. He can provide a lyric with humour or pathos, warmth and sincerity."

Cherry was half-right. While Campbell was indeed an enormously successful guitarist – he was a leading member of famed Los Angeles session musicians the Wrecking Crew, whose Hal Blaine and Earl Palmer also appeared on the album – his later success as a singer dwarfed his achievements as a musician.

But Cherry was spot-on in one respect, astutely describing Campbell's "rare interpretive ability". For Campbell could take a song – any song – and effortlessly infuse it with the kind of yearning that made people empathise with the songwriter rather than the singer. It was a strange gift, as if Campbell were able to channel someone else's sadness directly to the listener, without ever adding any of his own emotional baggage along the way. And when coupled with the right songwriter, as he was when partnered with Jimmy Webb on classics such as *Wichita Lineman*, *Galveston* or *By The Time I Get To Phoenix*, they created perfection.

Campbell and Webb. Two southerners attempting to make it big in Los Angeles, one the son of a sharecropper, the other the son of a Baptist preacher. Their careers would be intertwined from the moment in 1961 when, attracted by the singer's wistful voice, Webb bought his first single, Glen Campbell's cover of Jerry Capehart's *Turn Around, Look At Me*. The pair wouldn't meet for another six years, but from that moment on they created occasional magic. Campbell's best songs were also Webb's. When Campbell flew to London in 1977 to perform with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Webb was the conductor. A decade later they hooked up for *Light Years*, an album featuring eight Webb tracks. And earlier this year, when Campbell's final studio album, *Adios*, was released, there were four Webb songs on it. It was a touching relationship. During solo gigs, both men would talk about the other with enormous affection.

"When it came to friendship, Glen was the real deal," Webb wrote following Campbell's death. "He spoke my name from ten thousand stages. He was my big brother, my protector, my co-culprit, my John crying in the wilderness. Nobody liked a Jimmy Webb song as much as Glen! And yet he was generous with other writers: Larry Weiss, Allen Toussaint, John Hartford. You have to look hard for a bad song on a Glen Campbell album. He was giving people their money's worth before it became fashionable."

For more than 50 years and across more than 50 albums, Campbell repeated the formula, taking other people's songs and providing an emotional conduit between writer and receiver. Like Elvis Presley – another man whose strengths lay as an interpreter rather than as an originator – he was never really an 'album artist', even if his collections were unerringly cohesive. It was always about the song, right up until the end, when he made four albums that were put together almost as state-of-the-union addresses. They were albums curated with sympathy and taste, from 2008's *Meet Glen Campbell*, which included covers of songs from Green Day, Paul Westerberg, the Velvet Underground, Travis, Tom Petty and Jackson Browne, to the trio of albums he made after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2011. The first, *Ghost On The Canvas*, might just be the best album ever made by a 75-year-old, and featured contributions Billy Corgan, Rick Nielson, Dick Dale and Brian Setzer, plus another two songs by Westerberg. It sounded *current*.

Campbell was more than just a musician. He was a film star, appearing opposite an Oscar-winning John Wayne in *True Grit*. He hosted *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, which ran for four seasons on CBS, beaming the singer into American living rooms every Sunday evening. In 1969 he introduced the American TV premiere of The Beatles' final live performance, shot on the rooftop of the Apple Corps building in London. Hell, at the time, Campbell was *outselling* The Beatles in the US.

But he was first and foremost a musician. Heavily influenced by the jazz great Django Reinhart, he left home to 17 to join his uncle's band in New Mexico, from where he could send money home to his family in Arkansas. By 1960 he was in Los Angeles, joining The Champs, who'd had a global hit with *Tequila* two years earlier. The following year he got together with Phil Everly and Carole King for a one-off single as the Keestone Family Singers, and with the Wrecking Crew he played on hits by The Hollies, Dick Dale, The Monkees, Elvis, Bobby Darin, Rick Nelson, The Byrds, Merle Haggard, Lee Hazlewood, Nancy Sinatra, the Righteous Brothers, Ike & Tina Turner and dozens of others. When Brian Wilson decided he didn't want to play live with the Beach Boys, Campbell switched to bass and went on tour. And when Wilson needed a guitarist during the *Pet Sounds* sessions, Campbell got the call again.

Glen Campbell was a genius guitarist. In 1999 he appeared on The Nashville Network's *Country Legend's Homecoming*, appearing on a stage surrounded by Nashville royalty: Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Chet Atkins, Roy Clark, Crystal Gayle and more. Handed an acoustic guitar, the pressure on, he plays a fleet-fingered version of his first big hit, *Gentle On My Mind*. Mouths drop. Fellow guitarists study his fingers and grin with delight. There's an impromptu round of applause at the climax. And The Rhinestone Cowboy proves, once again, that *no one* was ever better at making difficult look easy. **FL**

THE STARS PAY TRIBUTE

I'm very broken up to hear about my friend Glen Campbell. He was an incredible musician and an even better person. I'm at a loss. Love & Mercy.
Brian Wilson

God bless and peace and love to Glen Campbell. Thanks for the music. The real rhinestone cowboy and love to all his family.
Ringo Starr

As well as your incredible musical abilities you were one of the most down to earth people I have ever known. RIP.
Peter Frampton

So sad to hear of Glen Campbell passing. A stellar session player, singer and performer. I loved his Jimmy Webb songs.
Paul Stanley

Huge loss in the world of music today. Rest In Peace.
Sheryl Crow

Glen was one of the premier guitar players in rock and country. A lot of people don't know the respect he had in the rock'n'roll world.
Alice Cooper

I'm so very sorry to hear this. Glen was such a talented, great guy. Thankful to have known him.
Kenny Rogers

Besides being an amazing solo artist, Glen was also a genius studio musician.
Lenny Kravitz

This month The Dirt was compiled by Simon Bradley, Rich Chamberlain, Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Jamie Hibbard, Rob Hughes, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Felix Flanagan

December 8, 1947 – August 4, 2017

Walter Trout has paid tribute to veteran harmonica player Felix Flanagan, calling him "a crazy, brilliant man". Iowa-born Flanagan played with blues greats such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins, JD Nicholson, Deacon Jones and Southside Slim. "You were one of a kind. I love you," Trout added of the 69-year-old.

Sonny Burgess

May 28, 1929 – August 18, 2017

Born in Newport, Arkansas, Albert Austin 'Sonny' Burgess was a rockabilly guitarist and singer. His vinyl debut came on the song *We Wanna Boogie* with The Pacers in 1956. Burgess died in a hospital in Arkansas having suffered a fall at his home. He was 88 years old.

Kenny Kanowski

Died August 6, 2017

Guitarist, singer and songwriter Kenny Kanowski, best known for a spell with hard rockers Steelheart that saw his co-written song *We All Die Young* used in the film *Rock Star*, died of as yet unknown causes. "It's with a heavy heart that I say RIP to a great guitarist/singer," said his friend Jeff Scott Soto.

Hysteria live next year!

Phil Collen reveals Def Leppard's plans for 2018.

Def Leppard guitarist Phil Collen has let slip that the band are planning a series of shows to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of their classic album.

Collen revealed the news while appearing as a guest on *Jonesy's Jukebox*, the radio show of former Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones. Asked whether Leppard were considering the possibility of performing *Hysteria* in its entirety, he said: "We are. I know it'll be next year we're gonna go on tour. We're getting some offers to play the whole album all the way through. So we'll be doing that."

A few days earlier, at a fan gathering, singer Joe Elliott was more circumspect when the same question came up. "Watch this space," he said. "There are going to be shows next year, there's probably going to be shows in the UK and they may well feature an iconic album in total… or they might not." **DL**

NEWS

Brad Whitford has revealed that **Aerosmith** are recording a "very rock'n'roll" new track and expects the band, who this summer undertook a European farewell tour, to be around for at least another five years and release new material during that time. "We're going to keep on playing until we can't play any more," says the guitarist.

Robbie Williams has issued an apology to former Led Zeppelin guitarist **Jimmy Page** after comparing his alleged behaviour in a home row to a "mental illness". "I understand why Jimmy will have found my words offensive and I apologise for any hurt that they have caused him and his family," said the former Take That star.

David Coverdale (pictured) says 2018 will see an all-new Whitesnake studio album and a world tour. "The next three to five years is spoken for with some really exciting projects," he told *Billboard*.

Kansas release a new concert album, *Leftoverture Live & Beyond*, on November 3 via Inside Out Music. It includes 19 tracks and will be available as a double CD digipak, four-disc 180-gram vinyl boxed set and a digital album. The veteran prog-rockers cancelled this summer's tour commitments due to "security reasons".

A correction to last issue's story: **Dan Reed Network** will be the special guests of **Extreme** on their December UK tour.

Robert Plant: new album in October and a tour in November.

Plant gets Fired up

Winter tour to promote eleventh album *Carry Fire*.

Robert Plant has confirmed the release of his eleventh solo album and a 14-date tour of the UK and Northern Ireland. *Carry Fire*, recorded with his backing band the Sensational Shape Shifters and produced by Plant himself, is due on October 13 via Nonesuch/Warner Bros. The Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde makes a guest appearance on *Bluebirds Over The Mountain*, a cover of a song previously recorded by both Ritchie Valens and the Beach Boys. The album was recorded at Top Cat studio in Box, Wiltshire, with additional recordings at Real World and Rockfield Studios.

Plant watchers will know that he first used the phrase 'carry fire' in his song *Dancing In Heaven* from the 2005 album *Mighty ReArranger*.

"I respect and relish my past works, but each time I feel the incentive to create new work I must mix old with new," he explains. "Consequently the whole impetus of the band has moved on its axis somewhat – the new sound and different space giving way to exciting and dramatic landscapes of mood, melody and instrumentation."

Plant and the Shape Shifters play Plymouth Pavilions November 16, Bristol Colston Hall 17, Wolverhampton Civic Hall 20, Llandudno Venue Cymru 22, Newcastle City Hall 24, Liverpool Olympia 25, Glasgow SEC Armadillo 27, Perth Concert Hall 28, Manchester Apollo 30, Belfast Ulster Hall December 2, Sheffield City Hall 6, London Royal Albert Hall 8, Portsmouth Guildhall 11 and Birmingham Symphony Hall 12.

Plant built up to the album's release by sharing 28 seconds of new material on his website and on social media. Back in May the cryptic message "Any time now…" appeared on his website, generating rumours that Led Zeppelin were to reunite for their 50th anniversary. **DL**

Journey meltdown gets uglier

"No more toxic shit. Done," says Neal Schon.

The schism within Journey took another upturn last month when Neal Schon voiced anger that three of his bandmates visited the White House under the group name, and suggested that they have plotted about touring without him.

"How would you feel [about that]?" the guitarist asked on Twitter. "They will not tour with the Journey name. Trust me. I've spent way too long building to give up the brand."

Claiming that Journey have always committed to remain neutral when it comes to politics and religion, founding member Schon was furious that vocalist Arnel Pineda, keyboard player/rhythm guitarist Jonathan Cain and bassist Ross Valory were photographed in the Oval Office with President Trump, claiming that the trio were attempting "to exploit the brand and use the name". He reiterated that "Journey was not there – three individual members were: Cain, Valory and Pineda, [all of] whom I found. Tours [of the White House] are done all the time but it could have been privately."

The disagreement has also thrown the future of the current line-up into doubt, with the guitarist tweeting: "One way or the other, I won't be dealing with any more toxic shit. Done."

Schon blames Cain's wife, Paula White-Cain, a minister who delivered the invocation at Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, for much of the bad blood currently circulating. A source within the Journey setup suggested that until they remove at least one member from the band (Schon also contends that the long-serving Valory is of "no help" when it comes to resolution), Journey will be "stuck in constant conflict". **DL**

ROBERT PLANT: MADS PERCH/PRESS; DAVID COVERDALE: ASH NEWELL/PRESS

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Ginger shows postponed

Troubled singer hospitalised.

Ginger Wildheart has been forced to postpone shows in Manchester and London after being hospitalised for "serious ongoing issues" with his mental health. His management later revealed that he was "receiving around-the-clock care and is in the safest possible place".

A report in *Hot Press* claimed that Ginger had spent a night in police custody following an altercation with an audience member at an acoustic show in Ireland. Ginger later tweeted that he had attempted suicide.

Last year Ginger recorded a track called *Fuck You Brain* with his friend Ryan Hamilton to highlight suicide prevention and raise mental health awareness, with proceeds going directly to the Samaritans.

The 52-year-old promised that a tour with his extreme band Mutation will take place in a few months, stating: "Music is a catharsis; a way of channelling the aggression and desperation that I'm currently experiencing."

Classic Rock wishes Ginger well, and remember if you need to talk to somebody about a similar problem, contact the Samaritans by calling 116 123 or by visiting samaritans.org. The service is free. **DL**

Ginger: going through hard times.

Lemmy gets crocked!

Natural History Museum names ancient sea monster after the Motörhead legend.

Lemmy's name has been given to "one of the nastiest sea creatures to have ever inhabited the Earth". Scientists have honoured the late Motörhead frontman, who died in late 2015, by naming an ancient crocodile after him. At almost 20-foot long and armed with gigantic blunt teeth to crush bones and turtle shells, the extinct creature now known as Lemmysuchus – it translates as 'Lemmy's crocodile' – was among the planet's biggest coastal predators more than 145 million years ago.

A fossil was discovered in the early 20th century in a clay pit near Peterborough by Michela Johnson, but it was Natural History Museum curator Lorna Steel who revealed that the specimen had been incorrectly classified and thus required a new name.

"As a long-standing Motörhead fan I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to immortalise the rock star in this way," says Steel. "We'd like to think that Lemmy would have raised a glass to Lemmysuchus." **DL**

NEWS

Deep Purple guitarist Steve Morse has responded to comments made by Ritchie Blackmore, saying that if a one-off show was proposed, he too would welcome a return for the Man In Black. "Fans would love it," says Morse, who joined Purple in 1994. "It would be nice, I think, to see closure with everybody involved and the bad feelings [of the past] put aside."

Iron Maiden bassist Steve Harris is considering the idea of converting his Essex home into a boutique hotel for Iron Maiden fans. The nine-acre spread, with a current market value of £3.95m, has been on the market for five years. Guests would be able to sleep where Maiden recorded their 1992 album *Fear Of The Dark* and several other studio sessions.

Scottish hard rockers **Heavy Pettin'** are to reunite for their first show in 25 years. They play the WinterStorm Festival, which takes place in Troon, Ayrshire on November 24 and 25. Their line-up will include original frontman Hamie and guitarists Punky Mendoza and Gordon Bonnar.

Chris Cornell's widow, Vicky, has commissioned a statue of the late Soundgarden/Audioslave/Temple Of The Dog frontman (pictured), which will be erected in the singer's home town of Seattle. She has hired sculptor and artist Wayne Toth to create the memorial. "Wayne has already given me a design," she says, "and the children and I love it."

WELCOME BACK

Chris Hillman

The former Byrd returns with a new album, with a little help from famous friends, that he says could be his last.

As one of the godfathers of country rock, Chris Hillman helped shape the course of Americana through his formidable body of work with The Byrds, the Flying Burrito Brothers, Manassas and the Desert Rose Band from the 1960s onwards. More than a decade has passed since his last solo album, but the 72-year-old has just returned with the exceptional *Bidin' My Time* album. Produced by Tom Petty, its impressive cast includes The Heartbreakers' Benmont Tench and Steve Ferrone, plus the two surviving Byrds, David Crosby and Roger McGuinn.

It's been too long since your last album, 2005's *The Other Side*. Why such a long wait?
To be totally honest, I was losing interest. I've been doing this since I was seventeen and the travelling was starting to wear on me.

The album was presented to me, really. Herb Pedersen had been singing back-up vocals for Tom [Petty] when he was on the road with Mudcrutch last year. Between them, they conjured up this idea. Tom told me we could record in his studio, but I told him he might not like any of my songs. He said: "No, I trust you." I was sort of rejuvenated through this process. I guess when you least seek something, it comes to you.

Is this you reclaiming your legacy?
It went that way without any pre-planning. But towards the end of this project, I said to Petty: "Y'know, this is kind of a conceptual album." It's covering early bluegrass and The Byrds, and even the title song, *Bidin' My Time*, reminds me of an old Flying Burritos cut. For the Everly Brothers track [*Walk Right Back*], Herb and I were just goofing around with it between takes, and Tom ran out of the booth and said: "Let's cut it!" That song was such an influence on me. I was always drawn to two- and three-part harmony singing.

The Byrds first recorded *The Bells Of Rhymney* in 1965. What prompted you to redo it for this record?
To me, that was The Byrds' signature song. It really explained who we were and what we were doing. Herb and I had cut that acoustically on another record, but I said to him: "If I can get Crosby to sing with us, let's cut it." And I did. David and I still kid around with each other after all these years, but I love the guy, as I do Roger. It wasn't a contrived method to get The Byrds back together, it was about having my friends involved.

> "It wasn't a contrived method to get The Byrds back together."

You also pay tribute to the late Gene Clark, The Byrds' chief songwriter, by redoing his 1965 song *She Don't Care About Time*.
What a lyric! Imagine this man writing that at nineteen years old. We all aspired to write something that deep. None of us ever saw Gene read a book, but these beautiful, divinely inspired lyrics would come out of him. My God, he wrote so many brilliant songs throughout his life. But then the other side of the coin was that he was this tortured soul. Whether or not that motivated him, I'm not sure.

So what's next for you?
I've been doing a few other things, including writing the obligatory, ageing-rock-star autobiography. I was all done, but now I have to finish the last chapter, because my life changed with doing this record. I don't know if I'll make another album, but this would be a nice way to end it. **RH**

Bidin' My Time is released on September 22 via Proper Music.

GINGER WILDHEART + CHRIS CORNELL: KEVIN NIXON

★ HIGH HOPES

The Shelters

Being helped by a major rock star has brought big expectations, but they're up for the fight.

The Shelters know a guy named Tommy. Tommy's an older dude, been around the block a few times. He's exactly the kind of man you want in your corner – had a few hits himself over the years. He's helped The Shelters out, shown them how to fine-tune their songs, offered advice when they've asked for it. Cos no one knows the music biz like him. But then he should. The man The Shelters call 'Tommy' is Tom Petty.

"I went to school with Tommy's stepson," says guitarist and sometime singer Chase Simpson. "I was never really aware of who he was when I was young, he was just my friend's dad. I'd pick his brains about music, he'd be super supportive of what I was doing. He'd let us use his studio. We knew it better than he did."

Petty did more than that – he co-produced The Shelters' self-titled debut album, a record that cherry picks the best bits of British Invasion-era 60s pop (The Beatles, The Kinks, The Who), filters them through a gauze of sunny 70s Californian rock and power pop, then updates them for today.

"A lot of guitar bands come from a really heavy, deep-sounding place," says vocalist and guitarist Josh Jove. "The music we love has a real fun approach. Not so much 'I wanna cry' as 'I wanna dance'."

Simpson (26, slacker haircut, dress-down T-shirt) met Jove (28, blond greaser quiff, vintage denim) a few years ago when the latter relocated from his native Florida to Los Angeles to try to carve out a career as a studio musician. They soon put together The Shelters, bringing in drummer Sebastian Harris and bassist Jacob Pilot. Their MO was simple: song power. "You're only as good as your tunes," says Jove. It's an approach that set them apart from the rest of LA's trend-driven music scene."

"All these bands in my eyes chase each other," says Simpson. "They're all trying to do the same as the last. None of our heroes chased tail lights."

It doesn't hurt to have one of the great American icons of the last 40 years as your Yoda figure. Petty gave the band free run of his studio, even enlisting Simpson and Jove to work on his last album, *Hypnotic Eye* (both co-engineered, while the latter added fuzz guitar to one track). But his most important role has been as a sounding board.

"He's a super-mentor," confirms Jove. "We run everything by him – why wouldn't you? He knows his shit better than anyone. He let's us figure it out on our own, but it's pretty hard to get a song past Tommy."

Petty's presence doesn't guarantee success; rather, it adds a layer of expectation to the struggles that any young band already faces. But The Shelters say they're up for the fight.

"We're the last generation that grew up loving classic rock'n'roll," says Simpson. "I see it when we play for younger audiences – some of those kids haven't seen a guy rip on a guitar solo. Their elder brother's music was rap, and that's kind of fading out. It's a good time for rock now. And I think that's what Tommy's trying to do – hand over the torch to another generation to take it and run with it." **DE**

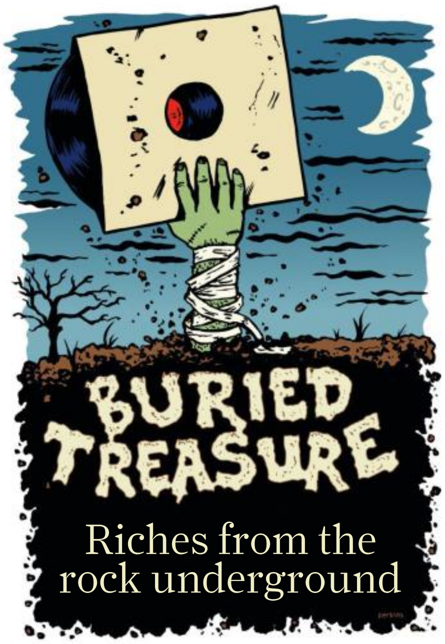
The Shelters by The Shelters is out now via Warner Bros.

FOR FANS OF...

"We love The Kinks' spirit, the freedom they have when it comes to playing with genres," says Jove. "They sound like a punk band on one song, a country band on another, then on another they'll just sound super-English."

Simpson: "Every other band had a theme but they weren't writing songs they thought they should. It all boils down to the song: is it a good or bad song?"

"We're the last generation that grew up loving classic rock'n'roll."



JERONIMO

***Jeronimo*, 1971, Bellaphon, Germany. £600.**

Jeronimo were a hairy power trio from Germany. Formed in 1969, they achieved success with their first two singles: *Heya* and *Na Na Hey Hey* (originally a hit for Steam, and later others, including Bananarama).

Jeronimo, their second album, is considered to be their creative pinnacle. Considering the band's popularity, it's strange why it's so rare and was pressed in such small numbers.

Within a short period of time the group had transformed from pop-rock to the full-blown progressive hard rock on display here. Excellent playing, a heavy sound, psychedelic passages, raw, melodic vocals and interesting arrangements are the key ingredients.

Starting off with two weighty tracks, *Sunday's Child* and *Shades*, the heaviness simmers down for the

'Excellent playing and a heavy sound are the key ingredients here.'

mellow contemplation of *Reminiscences*, before slamming right back in with the rifferama of highlight *How I'd Love To Be Home*. Elsewhere, the infectious boogie of *Understanding* is the most commercial offering, while the epic instrumental *Hugudila* is essentially a five-minute drum solo.

Following the release of their superb third album, *Time Ride*, the band split, with leader Ringo Funk going on to join fellow German progressive act Atlantis. Jeronimo have reunited at various times over the years and regained the rights to their recordings, and reissued this beast on vinyl and CD themselves several years ago. **LD**

NEWS

Dan Baird is standing down from his band Homemade Sin until the end of the year following the chronic lymphocytic leukaemia which forced him to sit out their slot at Ramblin' Man Fair. Baird describes the condition as "inherited and treatable, but debilitating in the short term". In order to keep the band going, Joe Blanton, the band's producer, will deputise.

Sons Of Apollo, a new group featuring former Dream Theater members **Mike Portnoy** (drums) and **Derek Sherinian** (keyboards), singer **Jeff Scott Soto**, bassist **Billy Sheehan** (Mr. Big, The Winery Dogs) and ex-Guns N' Roses guitarist **Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal**, release their debut album *Psychotic Symphony* via Inside Out Music on October 20. A worldwide tour will follow in 2018.

Europe (pictured) have revealed that their forthcoming eleventh album will be titled *Walk The Earth*. Produced by the Grammy-winning Dave Cobb, the follow-up to 2015's *War Of Kings* is released on October 20 via Hell & Back Recordings/Silver Lining Music.

King King have delayed their planned October UK tour until January 2018 while frontman Alan Nimmo undergoes a period of rest and rehabilitation following an operation. "This has been one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to take," he says. For the rescheduled dates see Listings, page 112.

WELCOME BACK

Third Eye Blind

Ahead of their UK tour dates, the band's frontman talks about image problems, politics and f**king things up.

Third Eye Blind have an image problem. In fairness, the problem isn't theirs – it's everyone else's. The San Francisco band were a more complex proposition than the wave of MTV post-grunge bands they were lumped in with, mixing up rock, pop and hip-hop influences with an edgy lyrical slant – breakthrough hit *Semi-Charmed Life* was about crystal meth addiction, while 2016 single *Cop Vs Girl* addressed the Black Lives Matter movement. Ahead of a UK tour, Stephen Jenkins puts some preconceptions to rest.

You've said of yourself: "I'm not a legacy guy," but you played your first album from start to finish on your recent US tour.

I'm not very nostalgic by nature. But to have an album that made it to twenty is nothing you should be blasé about. So I said that we'd play some new music, then play that record from back to front. And the last date, a homecoming show at the Greek in San Francisco, was the last time we did it. We won't do it again.

Did you feel that you were misunderstood back then?

I didn't feel like we were part of the scene we were put in. There was a kind of post-grunge mentality, a death cult. We were trying to cast that off. Instead of this nihilism that was part of Nirvana and Alice In Chains, we had a rage to live.

"Instead of the post-grunge mentality, a death cult, we had a rage to live."

Your work rate slowed down in the '00s. Did you enjoy that decade?

Yeah. Things started to pick up around 2007. I'd gone through a difficult break-up, and that created a lot of soul searching, which turned into a more whole, happier self. That coincided with people beginning to rediscover the band. A whole bunch of little puzzle pieces came together.

In 2011 you wrote the song *If Ever There Was A Time* in support of the Occupy movement. Do you think the protests had much effect?

America was fleeced of a fifth of its wealth and none of the people who did it were held accountable. I thought Occupy was a moment. But for a moment to become a movement, they have to have an idea that people can get behind, that they can actually turn into a policy. Nobody in the Occupy movement ever came up with that. There wasn't some leader who arose and turned it all into a point.

Your 2016 single *Cop Vs Phone Girl* plugged into the Black Lives Matter movement. Has rock lost its political edge?

Very much so. Our song was about a sixteen-year-old girl who got the shit beaten out of her by a campus security guard who had a gun, and they wouldn't play it on the radio. Well they did, but there's a line in the song where I say: *'Why is it so hard to say Black Lives Matter?'* Then people would call in saying: "Blue lives matter", meaning the police. It turned into this idiotic thing. It was not tolerated.

That recent US tour was named Summer Gods after your new EP – which never actually came out.

Ha! Yeah. We recorded a song called *Twice As Many Tigers*, which was basically me just freestyling over some trap (southern hip-hop) beats, and we chickened out on putting it out. It was really a Stephen Jenkins solo song. We just didn't get it together to record the rest of the songs. That's what we do with Third Eye Blind, we fuck things up. **DE**

The first of Third Eye Blind's shows in the UK and Ireland is at London's Roundhouse on September 27.

EUROPE: KEVIN NIXON

RAW POWER

Dead Gorgeous

Looking for a guitar that's a bit special? Try this PRS custom.

When noted bluesman and guitarist John Mayer found himself fronting a collaboration with Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir under the name Dead & Company, he needed an instrument that met the unique sonic needs of the gig. To that end he approached respected American guitar maker Paul Reed Smith with a list of requirements and, after an exhaustive R&D process, the result was 2016's Private Stock Super Eagle.

Now comes the Super Eagle II in a new hemp-green finish, just 120 of which have been made available to the public worldwide. Featuring a slightly elongated 25.37-inch scale length, the guitar is loaded with custom-voiced humbucker pickups, comprising a JM Narrowfield and a pair of JM 58/15s. These are controlled not only by a traditional five-way blade selector but also via a trio of micro-switches that act as coil-splits for each pickup. Increasing the tonal palate is an on-board JCF preamp with treble boost designed by Josh Florian that gives what Mayer describes as a more 'HD' sound, with two more dedicated switches giving full control.

The hollowbody's f-hole gives the guitar an open, more airy character, with the complement of tonewoods, including mahogany sides and curly maple for both the top and rear of the body. Curly maple has also been used for the wonderful neck, with its African blackwood 24-fret fingerboard sporting paua and green ripple abalone bird inlays.

Adding still further to the tone is the Gen-III bridge, designed to add mass and thus increase sustain. Even the Mayer-signed label set inside the body, designed by UK artist David Adrian Smith, is unique.

The Super Eagle II sounds as good as it looks and everything about it screams quality. Which, with a UK RRP of £10,995, it probably ought to.

More info at prsguitars.com/supereagle

Simon Bradley

GETTY

BREAD HEAD

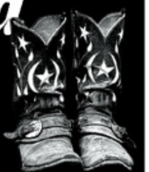
Where guitars go when they're Dead's.

Grateful Dead mainman Jerry Garcia's legendary status had long been established by the time of his passing in 1995, and as a result, several of his custom guitars have been sought by super-rich Deadheads ever since. Two of the most famous are 'Tiger' (pictured) and 'Wolf', both built by San Franciscan luthier Doug Irwin during the 70s. Wolf features a 24-fret ebony and maple neck and a body made from curly maple and purpleheart, while Tiger is made from a laminate of maple, cocobolo and vermilion woods bound with brass. It also boasts a revolutionary wiring design that incorporates both an on-board preamp and an effects loop.

Tiger was snapped up by Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay for $850,000 in 2002, while Wolf was bought anonymously in 2002 for $790,000. Subsequently, HubSpot CEO Brian Halligan shelled out a whopping $1.6million for it at a benefit auction earlier this year.

Sharp Dressed Man

Rock 'n' Roll accessories



This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

Sideburn Beast T-shirt
The Sideburn crew primarily make a cult indie magazine about speedway, a relatively niche motorsport in the UK, but they also know a thing or two about super-cool T-shirts. The Beast homage to Motörhead is our favourite, but be quick – every time it appears in the online store it sells out fast!
£18 @SideburnMag
Sideburn.BigCartel.com

Vans Thrasher Sk8-Hi Pro shoes
Okay, we'll admit it, we always find it exciting when two brands we love decide to collaborate, and this is one of those: massive skate shoe company Vans meets ultra-cool skate magazine *Thrasher*. They look and ride great.
£70 @Vans_66
Vans.co.uk

Spy Cyrus sunglasses
'Summer's almost gone,' Jim Morrison sang on the title track of The Doors' third studio album, 1968's *Waiting For The Sun*. Yet even heading into the darker months, as we are now, Jim knew a good pair of shades when he saw them, and he'd have loved these.
£85 @SpyOptic
SpyOptic.eu

NEWS

Rose Tattoo are back. Singer Angry Anderson has a new line-up that includes former AC/DC bassist Mark Evans and ex-The Angels and Skyhooks guitarist Bob Spencer. Dai Pritchard, the band's slide guitarist since 2007, remains on board and John 'Watto' Watson is the drummer.

A fire has destroyed the noted Canadian recording facility **Le Studio**. Located in Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, its clients included Rush (who made seven albums there), David Bowie, The Police and Asia. Le Studio had fallen into disrepair and last year a crowdfunding campaign to save the place fell short of its $800,000 target. An investigation into the blaze is under way.

Former Thin Lizzy drummer **Brian Downey** has a new band. Called Alive And Dangerous, it also includes guitarist Brian Grace plus former Low Rider members Matt Wilson and Phil Edgar on lead vocals/bass and lead guitar respectively. They play Nell's Jazz & Blues in West London on November 24.

Rolling Stones guitarist **Ronnie Wood** (pictured) has spoken about a cancer scare which led to him having a lesion removed from his lung earlier this year. "There was a week when everything hung in the balance and it could have been curtains – time to say goodbye," Wood, who was unwilling to put his body through chemotherapy, told *Event* magazine. "You never know what is going to happen."

WELCOME BACK

Josh Todd

Now starting his "third act", Buckcherry's JT channels his anger with new band Josh Todd & The Conflict.

It's little wonder that Josh Todd sounds so pissed off on *Year Of The Tiger*, the punk-edged debut record from his new project Josh Todd & The Conflict. Earlier this year, Todd's 'other' band Buckcherry split with fellow founder member Keith Nelson and long-time drummer Xavier Muriel. Rather than lick his wounds, Todd got to work on The Conflict with BC guitarist Stevie D.

What was the origin of Josh Todd And The Conflict?
Last year we were touring with Buckcherry and I wanted to write songs – it was time. I didn't know what was going on with BC and Stevie, and I ended up writing an electronic EP [Spraygun War's *Into The Blackness*]. It was at that point we knew we had some good songwriting chemistry, because in the past Stevie wasn't really allowed to contribute much in Buckcherry. One of the first songs we wrote was *Year Of The Tiger*, and when we wrote that I knew we had something. We were clear in the direction we wanted to go, so it never felt like Buckcherry

Is starting a new project a risk when you're already in an established band?
Buckcherry is established but we only have a few countries we can go to. We screwed up Europe back in the day with not going there consistently. We can only really go to the UK and make it worth our while in paying for it all. We have the States, Canada, Japan and Australia and we really over-toured. I wanted to have two bands and be able to tend to The Conflict for a year and tour the whole world and build it up properly, then I'll go back to BC and let the Conflict rest. You have to build anticipation. That is a problem a lot of bands are facing. You can't be out on the road all the time, but if you're resting at home you're not making any money. This is a new band, so it was a lot of work, but this is a labour of love. There is more pressure to put out a Conflict record than there is to put out a Buckcherry record. I felt like I had to make the record of my career. Pressure drives you to go into realms that you don't normally go into and to push yourself. I found a whole new bag of tricks on this record. It's a lot more aggressive and it was so much fun.

> **"I had a really painful period in the middle of Buckcherry."**

So the plan is to juggle two bands?
I want to keep making Conflict records, and I will make another Buckcherry record for sure. I'm very passionate about Buckcherry and now we have new members. It's the best line-up Buckcherry has ever had. We did a lot of touring last year, though, so it's time to give it a rest and we'll get back to it eventually.

You split with two of Buckcherry. Did that influence you on this record?
I had a really painful period in the middle of Buckcherry, and then we wrote *15* and it changed our lives. I've had a lot of turbulence in the music business. I'm going into my third act now with this record. Buckcherry was in a lot of disarray, now it is all smoothed out, but there were individuals not being up-front with me; a lot of individuals that I was really good to over time and that I had a good relationship with and it ended really poorly. That's when I wrote [*Year Of The Tiger* song] *Fucked Up*. Everything was so fucked up, and I had this aggressive music from Stevie and it was great. It's easy for me to access anger and pain. **RC**

Year Of The Tiger is out on September 15 via Century Media Records.

RONNIE WOOD: REX

"Rock is dead? Absolute load of balls. Total toss. All that stuff is bollocks."

★ HIGH HOPES

Wayward Sons

Toby Jepson's rockers emerge with a forthright album – and a message for Gene Simmons.

He has enjoyed an impressive 30-plus year career with Little Angels, Gun, Fastway and many more, but as he entered 2017 Toby Jepson was busying himself as an in-demand producer rather than a vocal-powerhouse frontman.

It all changed when he was approached by record label Frontiers about putting together a new project. The first thought was a new solo album (his last was 2013's *Raising My Own Hell*), but Jepson quickly decided otherwise.

"We thought about doing a solo thing, but I had tried those acoustic solo tours and I always felt naked without a band," he says. "I can't do it as Toby Jepson, it's ridiculous. I spoke about putting a band together and I felt compelled to do it. It's so hard to get a record deal in this industry, so it was a privilege to have them come to me. They just said to go make the record and they'd hear it when it was done. I've never had that. I don't know why they were so confident!"

With a record deal in the bag, Jepson put together Wayward Sons, tapping Sam Wood (guitar), Nic Wastell (bass), Dave Kemp (keys) and Phil Martini (drums). Jepson was confident that his bandmates would gel, but some of them met for the first time only when they got into the rehearsal room.

"It was wonderful," Jepson says of the band's first get-together. "At the first rehearsal we did two or three days flat out, and seven songs from that session made it on to the record. That was how successful it was."

They quickly had their debut album, *Ghosts Of Yet To Come*, in the bag. Tracked live off the floor in a Worcestershire studio, it's an unapologetic slab of retro rock that finds Jepson in ferociously fine fettle. On opener *Alive*, for example, he shrieks with an ease that really should be beyond a man closing in on his 50th birthday.

"The high stuff I find a doddle to do," he says. "I don't know how or where it comes from, but it's still there.

It seems that Wayward Sons repaid that much-welcomed label confidence by putting out a record that played to the band's strengths. The aforementioned *Alive* has tinges of 80s metal, while the title track falls somewhere between classic Thin Lizzy and 90s Brit rock. Most refreshingly, the record is rough, raw and a right old rocker. So did Jepson not get Gene Simmons's memo about rock being dead?

"That's an absolute load of balls," Jepson says. "It is total toss. What he's doing is just self-promotion. I love Kiss, but this 'rock is dead' stuff is bollocks. There are bands playing in garages around the world right now that will be the next generation of great rock'n'roll bands." **RC**

Ghosts Of Yet To Come is released on September 15 via Frontier Records.

FOR FANS OF...

Although inspired by classic rock for his new project, Jepson embraced some more unexpected influences too. "I listened to all the old records I loved: *Parallel Lines* by Blondie, The Blockheads, The Knack, *Never Mind The Bollocks*, as well as Sabbath and Soundgarden. I listened to that and the songs started flowing."

TONY MOTTRAM/PRESS

Heavy Rotation

What we've been listening to this month

1 Megalomania
Black Sabbath

You'd have to search long and hard to find a more unapologetically malevolent piece of music than this. Ozzy Osbourne manages to schizophrenically channel soul in torment and Satan's own imp in a single vocal performance. Now crisply remastered, exemplifying an effortless, riff-driven complexity perfected on *Sabotage*, here's metal's zenith.

2 American Slang
The Cadillac Three

One of the more Springsteen-y blue-collar tracks on the Nashville trio's upcoming album *Legacy, American Slang* offers catchy, southern goodness for the 21st century.

3 The Cove
Black Country Communion

It's finally here: the album that many thought would never be made. From *IV*, *The Cove* captures Messrs Hughes, Bonamassa, Sherinian and Bonham in melancholic although slightly groovy mood, offering distant echoes of bassist /vocalist Hughes's former band Trapeze.

4 Bastard Of Society
H.e.a.t

While H.e.a.t's long-awaited fifth album throws the occasional curve ball, its opening track *Bastard Of Society* presents the Swedes at their tried 'n' trusted best: snotty, vulgar, irreverent and at the same time deeply melodic and satisfying.

5 Wicked Garden
Stone Temple Pilots

One of the lesser-known tracks from the just-released deluxe 25th-anniversary edition of *Core*, STP's debut album, but a real cracker. Up-tempo, edgy, rough-'n'-raw sounding, with Scott Weiland's growly vocals and a short but sharp guitar solo. Top track from one hell of an album.

6 Strange Bird In The Sky
Koyo

A fascinatingly seamless fusion of prog, alt.rock, psychedelia, post-grunge and indie sounds from this Leeds-based five-piece. But forget the terminology. *Strange Bird In The Sky* sounds like quite a few other bands, yet at the same time it's unique.

7 Edith Piaf (Said It Better Than Me)
Sparks

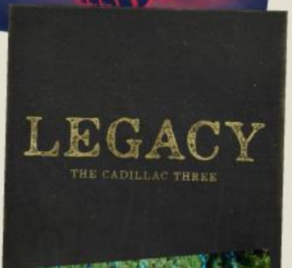
Showing no sign of losing their endlessly experimental ingenuity, the Mael brothers return in significant style. The repeated core refrain of '*Live fast and die young, too late for that*' on *Edith Piaf (Said It Better Than Me)* exemplifies the bone-dry humour that remains at the heart of their enduring art.rock vision.

8 Blindness To Danger
Lionize

We saw the groovy Marylanders play this at the Black Heart pub in London, and it rocked *hard*. Taken from their upcoming album *Nuclear Soul*, it steps away from their reggae-infused roots and into the broader realms of big-stage-friendly rock.

9 A Pacific Sonata
Motorpsycho

Taken from the veteran Norwegian trio's new double album *The Tower*, a hazy 15-minute epic which begins in a pastoral mood before shimmering off into the stratosphere, will be aural food and drink for fans of latter-day Opeth.



H.e.a.t: snotty, vulgar, irreverent, deeply melodic and satisfying.

KEVIN NIXON

10 Two Fifty Nine
Cats In Space

In which these UK retro-rockers challenge our radio tastemakers to unleash their wares on the airwaves. '*Hey deejay, don't fade it... stop counting, just play it. It's only two minutes fifty-nine*,' they plead. '*It's okay... no solo, no coda, short intro.*' Go on, you know it makes sense.

11 Kill My Baby Tonight
L.A. Witch

Possibly coming across a trifle too Spahn Ranch house band for those of a more delicate disposition, L.A. Witch fetch up at an intersection where desert rock and David Lynch collide. Bewitching honey-and-henbane vocals caper across huge Rorschach guitars: part Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, part Shangri-Las, all rock'n'roll.

12 Hot Tin Roof
Brian Howe

Having kept a low profile in recent years, the former Ted Nugent/Bad Company frontman has bounced back with this joyous, hook-laden anthem. Although now based in Florida, he's even been threatening to play a gig or two in his UK homeland. If he does, it'll be welcome back.

13 Two Birds
The Bronx

You may recall The Bronx for their hardcore punk credentials. In which case *Two Birds* may sound more melodic and garage rock'n'roll-ish than you'd expect (think Foo Fighters or QOTSA at their rawest, plus a layer of subtle-but-sunny harmonies). Either way, we like it.

14 She's A Rainbow
Rolling Stones

Now we're all finally over all that nonsense about *Their Satanic Majesties Request* being the Stones' psychedelic folly, have fallen in love with the album, fallen out of love with it again, reassessed our position and ultimately decided to just, like, dig it, man, 50-year old gem *She's A Rainbow* reveals itself to be the feelgood hit of what's left of the summer.

15 Absent Friend
Bark Psychosis

Reissued for the first time since '94, Bark Psychosis's *Hex* has been hailed in its absence as post-rock's greatest, most innovative album. With songs deconstructed and rebuilt in the studio with dazzling, subtle, sometimes unexpectedly tangential results, *Hex*, and especially the curiously climactic *Absent Friend*, astounds repeatedly.

16 Bulls
All Them Witches

One of the dreamiest cuts from All Them Witches' excellent latest album *Sleeping Through The War*, *Bulls* starts off hazily before swelling into a mighty chorus of celestial choral backing and thunderously grungy guitars. Modern-day heavy rock psychedelia at its best.

17 Kebabträume
D.A.F.

Thirty-five years on, and the stripped visceral sound of Gabi Delgado-López and Robert Görl's minimalist, electro-punk, EDM-birthing Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft retains its startlingly futuristic aura. Straight outta Düsseldorf (where else?), newly boxed alongside the similarly iconic *Der Mussolini*, *Kebabträume* is dance music for the fists.

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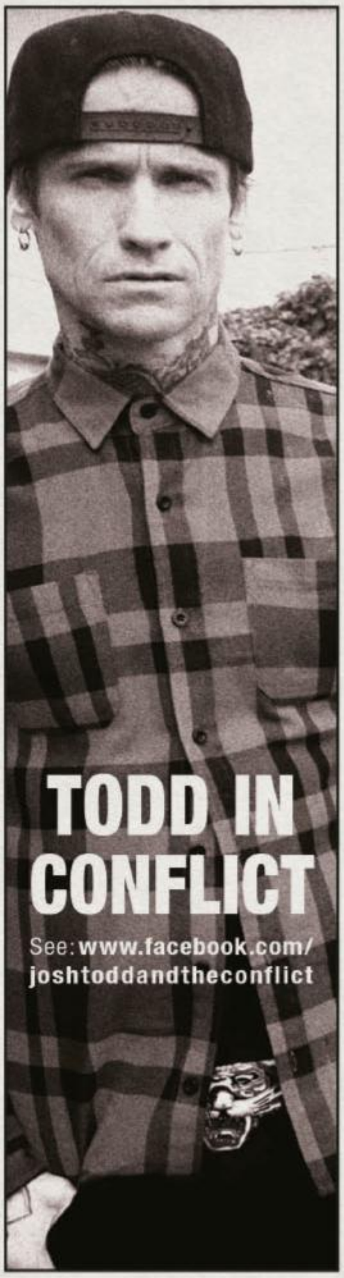
JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT

Friday, 15th September 2017 | FOR A GREATER RECORD COLLECTION | @JTCONFLICT

NEW ALBUM HITS UK STREETS

By Josh Todd, & the Conflict

Buckcherry one of hard rock's finest bands will give way for a while to an amazing, dynamic new project Josh Todd and the Conflict. The band is set to release their raucous debut album on September 15th, 2017. **Full Story on 'YEAR OF THE TIGER'**



TODD IN CONFLICT

See: **www.facebook.com/joshtoddandtheconflict**

BUCKCHERRY TAKE TIME OUT

YEAR OF THE TIGER

Josh Todd has a lot of storytelling inside and he always did want to start another band. Something more reckless and off the beaten rock path. A lot of changes had taken place in Buckcherry and he didn't want to go another year without making new music. BC is still in a great place but with the record dropping on September 15th, full attention now turns to **JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT.** Full story on **'YEAR OF THE TIGER'**

JT: "All the problems get washed away when you join the Conflict!"

FULL STORY: TRACKS 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 & 11

INCLUDES THE SINGLES: **'YEAR OF THE TIGER', 'FUCKED UP', & 'RAIN'**

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THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Motörhead

Ace Of Spades

It's one of the instantly recognisable all-time classic tracks of heavy rock and Motörhead's signature tune. But how did it come about?

Words: **Dave Everley**

Motörhead had speed in their veins and wind in their sails when they entered the studio to record their fourth album, *Ace Of Spades,* in the summer of 1980. Their previous release, the live *Golden Years* EP, had turned this gnarliest of bands into unlikely Top 10 stars. But it would be *Ace Of Spades* – particularly its unforgettable title track – that sealed their immortality.

From its overdriven bass intro to its squealing, hit-the-brakes ending two minutes and 48 seconds later, this gamblers' psalm would become not just Motörhead's signature song, but also one of the all-time great rock'n'roll anthems.

Naturally, the band themselves had no such ambitions when they holed up in Rockfield Studios, South Wales in early 1980 to begin rehearsing for the follow-up to the white-hot one-two of *Overkill* and *Bomber,* two brilliant albums released within seven months of each other in 1979.

"We went down to Rockfield for a couple of weeks, got in the vodka and everything else," says guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke. "Unfortunately, Lemmy wasn't too up for rehearsing in those days – he had a nice bird up there with him, so he was distracted. But Phil [drummer 'Philthy Animal' Taylor] and I used to like playing, so after we'd finished fishing and fucking about and God knows what, me and Phil would have a little bash. It gave us an opportunity to work out some riffs."

Ace Of Spades was one of them. The band recognised its potential, and worked it up into a rough song and recorded an instrumental version at Rockfield. Back in London, they added vocals and overdubs. This early incarnation first appeared on the 1989 odds-and-sods album *Dirty Love.* While not dissimilar from the finished version, it lacked two key components: that steel-plated central riff, and the breakdown that Lemmy memorably described as "the tap-dancing section".

Producer Vic Maile, who had previously worked with Lemmy's former band Hawkwind and who Clarke affectionately describes as "a nice bloke, very soft, big hooter, short hair", played a big part in fixing both.

"Vic kind of questioned what we were doing with the song," says Clarke. "He made us look at that riff, so Lemmy and I started fucking around with it a bit. It was one of the only times we'd written in the studio."

Maile also had what Clarke called "his box of tricks" – a cardboard box full of items used to provide sound effects. Amid the maracas and rattlesnake tails was a set of woodblocks which would provide the clacking sound during the breakdown.

"He said: 'This is what we'll do'," explains Clarke. "We were pissed or speeding and we were totally against it. 'Well, we'll do it cos it's you, Vic, but we ain't gonna fucking use it.' He set up a nice Neumann mic, and the three of us stood there with the blocks. Of course, at first we're all doing it at different fucking times: 'Come on, Phil, for fuck's sake!' 'No, man, it's you!' But when we heard it, we thought: 'Oh, it's not bad.'"

With its turbo-charged new riff and memorable breakdown, the track was beginning to sound special. The final piece in the jigsaw was Lemmy's lyrics – an attempt, he said, to cram as many gambling references in as possible: the high one, snake eyes, dead man's hand (and don't forget the joker…). In typical myth-making fashion, he claimed to have written the lyrics in the back of a Transit van while speeding down the motorway at 90mph.

"He might have written it in the fucking shitter for all I know," Clarke says with a laugh. "He used to do that. We'd say: 'Man, we need some fucking lyrics for this.' So he used to go for a shit and write the lyrics. But if he said he wrote it in a Transit van, then you've got to believe him."

Ace Of Spades reached No.15 in the UK when it was released in November 1980. It swiftly became a highlight of their live set.

The last time Clarke saw Lemmy was at the *Classic Rock* Awards in October 2015, two months before the singer's death. Motörhead were due to play UK dates the following January, including two dates at Hammersmith Apollo, and the two of them talked about the guitarist joining them on both nights.

"He looked so frail at the *Classic Rock* Awards," says Clarke. "I was a bit shocked. I did think that he wouldn't make the gigs because he was so frail. I never thought he was going to die, though."

After Lemmy's death, an online campaign to get *Ace Of Spades* back in the charts pushed it to No.13, two spots higher than its original peak more than 35 years before. In 2016, Clarke joined old sparring partners Saxon and Girlschool on tour. Each show would culminate with a mass rendition of *Ace Of Spades.*

"It went down a fucking storm," he says. "It didn't bring tears to my eyes, but it was very emotional. What can I say?"

In his later years, Lemmy had mixed feelings about the song he played every night on stage with Motörhead. While he recognised its enduring quality, familiarity definitely bred contempt.

"It's got a natural speed, a velocity of its own, it's got a great arrangement and it rocks like a bastard."

"I'm sick to death of it now," he wrote in his 2002 autobiography, *White Line Fever.* "We didn't become fossilised after that record, you know, we've had quite a few good releases since then. But the fans want to hear it so we still play it every night. For myself, I've had enough of that song."

Eddie Clarke has no such issues: "It's a fantastic track. It's got a natural speed, a velocity of its own, it's got a great arrangement and it rocks like a bastard. And Lemmy's lyrics are fantastic.

I sometimes say to people: 'I used to be in a band years ago', and they say: 'Oh, which one?' When I say Motörhead, they look bemused. So I say: '*Ace Of Spades*' and the penny drops. They might not know Motörhead, but they definitely know *Ace Of Spades.*"

MOTÖRHEAD MEET THE PHANTOM FLAN FLINGER

Motörhead made two appearances on *Top Of The Pops* to promote *Ace Of Spades,* but it was their stint on anarchic kids' TV show *Tiswas* that was most memorable.

"*Tiswas* was really fucking funny," says Eddie. "All the bands used to love doing that show. We were doing an interview with Sally James and she says, 'Oh look, there's somebody over there knows you.' Me and Lemmy turn around like c**ts, and of course [black-masked, custard-pie-toting character] the Phantom Flan Flinger fucking does us both."

That wasn't the end of the chaos, as the band joined the show's regulars to tell jokes to the camera while being drenched with buckets of water. "That was such a fucking laugh," says Clarke. "Even though we'd normally end up punching the c**ts."

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: REX

Motörhead: people "might not know Motörhead, but they definitely know *Ace Of Spades*," says Eddie Clarke.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
November 8, 1980

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
No.15 in 1980, No.13 in 2016

PERSONNEL
Lemmy
Bass/vocals
Fast Eddie Clarke
Guitar
Philthy Animal Taylor
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Kilmister, Clarke, Taylor

PRODUCER
Vic Maile

LABEL
Bronze

Q&A

Josh Homme

The Queens Of The Stone Age mainman on working with Iggy, not being a natural frontman and loving to dance.

Words: **Marcel Anders**

Over the past couple of years, California's desert rock darling Josh Homme has become almost as widely known for his production work (Iggy's 2016 album *Post Pop Depression* owed much of its sound to Homme's input) as for his day job fronting Queens Of The Stone Age. Still, for a man who's spent much of his 30-odd-year career moving from project to project (Kyuss, Them Crooked Vultures, Eagles Of Death Metal…), the propensity for new adventures is hardly surprising. He even guested on a Lady Gaga single, *Perfect Illusion*, last year. Most recently he's made a new QOTSA album, *Villains*, produced by Mark Ronson after he fell in love with Ronson's mega-hit *Uptown Funk*.

We caught up with Homme on a sunny day in Munich.

There were a lot of guests on the previous Queens album, so it's a bit surprising that there are none at all on *Villains*.
Although we always have a good time together, the last record [2013's *...Like Clockwork*] was difficult to make. So it was kind of like being on the rowboat to hell. It was funny, but it was going to hell. And so the guests really saved us and sort of acted like a break from it all. And then it became funny, where it was like: "Well, let's try… let's have this." It was so many people, and I knew that they weren't going to over-impact on what we'd done, because that defeats the purpose. There was no need for anybody this time.

Did you talk to Dave Grohl about that? The new Foo Fighters' album has quite a few guests on it.
Well, you know, I think we've always had a great relationship of twisting our own versions of each other here and there. We've been friends for so long, and it's fun to play with people, in all honesty. I mean, I've gotten the luxury of collaborating with more people than anyone I know. And I'm really thankful, cos I've learned so much stuff, and it's cool – that notion of bringing the revelation to someone else, that you can collaborate with someone and it's not forever. Nothing is. In fact we're chasing moments here. Do you want to have one? And I'll change your life for you. And that'd be kind of foolish to turn down, when the environment's right.

The environment was right with Iggy Pop and Lady Gaga?
Well, normally I'm the one offering, you know? (laughs) In the last couple years there's been some cool offers, which has been interesting cos I even remarked about five years ago: "No one ever asks me to do anything." And then I was like: okay, wait, that's not exactly true. My manager was putting together a full discography of everything, and that list was bigger than I thought. I'm not too nostalgic, so I don't look back so much.

But working with Iggy must have been a dream come true. Surely he was on your wish list?
Well, I only had one goal on my list, and that was to make a record with Iggy one day, so I don't have any other – number two is blank and that's kind of been it. Honestly, I was like, in a strange sort of depression way: "What do I do?" But you find your way.

Could you imagine doing another album with him, or was that a one-off?
I'd never tell you that anyways [laughs].

I could ask him.
I know you could. But I think he was very adamant – and I came to understand why – that this would be his last record. He said he'll still do stuff or guest over here or there, but the putting everything into an album and then promoting it, this is the one to end on.

Will you ever re-form Kyuss or join any of its spin-offs?
I don't want to go back. I can't go back. I don't like… I'm not nostalgic. It makes me sad. And for me, that's not being alive. I know some people who are able to do that, and sometimes I'm envious of that, but it doesn't make me feel good, because it makes me want to run away. But there's nowhere to run. You can't run away. Wherever you go, there the fuck you are. It's like: where are you going to go, man? When you have red hair, you learn to either stay or run. And I don't run, man.

What made you use a string quartet for the first time?
I've always used horns and masked them as guitars all the time. I'm a tuba guy. Because you haven't lived until you've been in a room with eight tubas.

Your upcoming tour will take place in huge venues like Madison Square Garden, The O2…
I know. I've tried to avoid it for years, trust me [laughs].

Does that mean you have to come up with a proper show?
All I can offer you is the same – this who we are. We played a festival yesterday with Eagles Of Death Metal, Queens and Iggy. And Jesse [Hughes] is such an amazing frontman, I love watching him. It's like he was born to do it. And Iggy, there's no question. But I'm not. I don't do what those two guys do. I do what I do. I can't offer any more on that. I'll do that the most I can. I'll make each night different from the night before, but I'm not going to get you chanting "Day-o, day-o…", you know? You'll have to go somewhere else for that.

Does Josh Homme like to dance – at least in private?
Hell yeah. I love to dance. I mean, I dance when we play anyway. That's what's so great about [playing live with] Iggy, too – I was free to move. I'm kind of Velcro'd to the mic a lot of times, and on the Iggy tour I got to finally just go: "Ah, play guitar and move" I love going dancing with my brother and his husband. It's just such a freeing thing. Like Palm Springs, with the gay community there, I feel free dancing out in that environment. I've always liked that. I remember when I was a kid, I'd be going to a junior-high dance and going: "Why are you guys standing here? All the girls are on the dancefloor," and them saying: "It's stupid." It's like: "No, you're just saying you're scared. No one cares. Be a fool, let's go."

Villains is out now via Matador.

TRIP FONTAINE/DALLE/ICONICPIX

“You haven’t lived until you’ve been in a room with eight tubas.”

Santander
CYCLES
MAKE RACISTS AFRAID AGAIN

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Lionize

They like sci-fi, they're a rock'roll band with reggae cred and they hope new album *Nuclear Soul* will make them less niche.

Words: **Polly Glass** Portrait: **Will Ireland**

THE VIDEO FOR Lionize's new track *Blindness To Danger* features frontman Nate Bergman being mercilessly destroyed by a professional wrestler. It's just the kind of daring you'd expect from a man who performs in head-to-toe gold.

"It's a metaphor for clawing your way to the top," Bergman tells us, "and it's not always about winning the fight, but *living* it the next day."

There's certainly a lot of fight in this Maryland four-piece, and it was displayed in their recent London show. An almighty blast of fiery grooves, Deep Purple-infused organ and Bergman's soul-charged vocals (informed by the likes of Sam Cooke, OV Wright and Joe Cocker), their live set has won over a lot of naysayers and finds the band on tremendous form.

Their latest album, *Nuclear Soul*, merges sci-fi with reality.

Where their previous albums have surfed fantastical worlds (drawing lyrically from the likes of Philip K Dick and *Star Wars*), their sixth is more centred on current events. Not that they've lost their sense of the science-fictional.

"We've arrived at this dystopian world that we were fantasising about for years," Bergman reasons. "Donald Trump is president. We're here, it's now. This is *Back To The Future*. These are really emotionally raw stories that we're telling about ourselves experiencing this stuff, but through the scope of a sci-fi world."

They're a rock'n'roll band, with vibrant roots.

As a freshman in high school, Bergman was listening to bands such as Clutch, Led Zeppelin and ZZ Top. Soon after a friend played him a tape of go-go music – a DC-born hybrid of funk, Latin and hip-hop –he went to an all-ages go-go show at a nearby school.

"I'll never forget seeing the rickety stage, where a high-school marching band might perform," he remembers, "and these guys from inner-city DC playing to what was seemingly a predominantly African-American crowd. I was mesmerised, thinking: 'This is cooler than punk rock', because no one was trying to hurt me. It was this real organic natural energy."

'Reggae-rock' is part of their story…

A similarly natural energy was integral to Lionize when they formed in 2004, having collectively ingested go-go, classic rock, reggae, punk and blues. Over the years their reggae credentials especially grew strong; they've toured with Steel Pulse and Bad Brains, and recorded in the Bob Marley-famed Harry J Studios in Jamaica. At one point they were the backing band for reggae/dub legend Lee Scratch Perry.

…but not the whole story

Ultimately, however, Lionize are far less niche than their history might suggest – and they hope that *Nuclear Soul*, with its bigger, broader rock scope, will change things.

"Labels are good in one sense, but if you don't like reggae, that automatically discounts us," Bergman says. "And we're so much more than that, we're constantly evolving. At this point we've said what we want to say with reggae. It'll come back, maybe, but right now we're really exciting about moving forward."

They're not afraid to think big.

Having premiered *Nuclear Soul* on tour with their friends Clutch last year, the band have seen that the new material thrives in huge venues, as well as the more intimate ones.

"The priority is writing great songs. But our band is very interested in success, in terms of reaching as many people as possible. I don't think there's a doubt in my mind that we want to be one of the biggest bands in the UK, in America. Any band that tells you they don't think about broader success is lying."

They sound tough, but they wouldn't trash a dressing room.

"We kick down the door with a smile," grins Bergman. "We've been through the shittiest parts of a band's career; we've been dropped from labels, we've have tours fall out from under us, we've been in the middle of nowhere, Wyoming with a hundred and forty dollars in our account; we've slept in vans, on floors, outside, under the van… We realise what it's like to be treated like shit. It wouldn't feel right if we showed up two hours late and trashed the dressing room. At the end of the day we're musicians, we get to travel and play music, and that's a privilege."

Nuclear Soul is released on September 8 via The End Records.

MEN IN BLACK

They were a supergroup with the world at their feet, but they let their world implode. After a "long hiatus", **Black Country Communion** are back, with a new album and a new perspective, having been reminded that "we make a really good racket when we don't get in our own way".

Words: **Joe Bosso** Portraits: **Neil Zlozower**

THE
CAN AM

Ready to give it another go: (l-r) Joe Bonamassa, Glenn Hughes, Jason Bonham and Derek Sherinian, shot exclusively for *Classic Rock*, Los Angeles, July 2017.

It seems nobody told Glenn Hughes that lead singers are supposed to be fashionably late – for everything. On a recent Sunday afternoon in Los Angeles, the veteran vocalist/bassist arrives at photographer Neil Zlozower's studio before any of the other members of his band, Black Country Communion.

"I never went in for the prima donna shit," he says with an elegant yet dismissive wave of his hand. "Believe me, I've seen enough of that behaviour over the years. I could give lessons if I wanted to. No good can come from it. Be a pro, I say."

Guitar ace Joe Bonamassa is next in the door, and he quickly informs Zlozower that he's on the clock. Bonamassa keeps to a tight schedule most of the time, and tomorrow morning he's flying to Havana to shoot a documentary. "We're going to do a reverse *Buena Vista Social Club* thing," he says. "I'm gonna grab a bunch of Cubans and try to play the blues with them. We'll see what happens. If it works, that'll be great. If it doesn't, well, it'll be a different kind of film."

Hughes and Bonamassa greet each other with warm hugs and spend a few minutes catching up on their recent activities. Their camaraderie is natural and unforced – and somewhat surprising, given the way the two musicians sniped at each other on social media back in 2012, a bitter public exchange that resulted in the fast implosion of Black Country Communion following the release of their third album, *Afterglow*. "We were like visionaries," Bonamassa says. "Glenn and I invented mean tweets before they became presidential."

> "Glenn and I were like visionaries. We invented mean tweets before they became presidential."
>
> JOE BONAMASSA

Hughes lets out a good-natured laugh, perhaps hoping to downplay the experience. But Bonamassa is serious – he seems to regard the matter with a sense of pride: "Well, we did invent mean tweets. We should get ahead of that and own it."

Owning their past is something the members of Black Country Communion are slowly coming to terms with. And they have good reason to, as it now seems as if they're bucking for a future. They've got a righteous and robust new album, *BCC IV*, out this month, and they don't mind if you refer to it as a comeback.

"It's our first record in five years – I guess that's what you call it," Hughes says. "But here's the thing: it's really a great record. When you hear it, you're hearing me going back to my roots."

He beams a high-wattage smile and adds: "I can't be modest about this. I just have to crow. I'm such fan of this band. If I weren't in this band, I would want to be in this band."

Without prompting, he's quick to stress that the disharmony between him and Bonamassa wasn't as deep-seated and explosive as had been reported when the whole thing collapsed. "It was more like misunderstandings," he says. "Joe and I had never fallen off the rails. That's a big misconception. Oh, sure, there were some moments we went: 'Oh, God. What now?' But we were always friends. It wasn't like other bands that have these really horrible break-ups."

He pauses, searching for the right words. "And ours wasn't so much a break-up as it was a long hiatus."

"It's true," Bonamassa interjects. "We never actually lost contact. We just stopped playing. And that was a shame, because Glenn is the whole reason why I got into this thing. I was a huge Glenn Hughes fan. I was honoured to be in a band with him." He throws the singer a smile. "And I still am."

Black Country Communion began as the brainchild of producer Kevin Shirley, who has worked as Bonamassa's regular sonic architect and chief confidant since the two first worked together on the guitarist's *You & Me* album in 2007. After witnessing an impromptu jam between Bonamassa and Hughes, Shirley brought in drummer Jason Bonham and former Dream Theater keyboard player Derek Sherinian with the idea of putting a fresh coat of paint on 70s-era classic rock.

"I thought they could be a hark back to the glory days of great bands like Free, Bad Company, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple," Shirley recalls. "And boy, did we have the right personnel! Those

> "I can't be modest about this. I'm such a fan of this band. If I weren't in this band, I would want to be in this band."
>
> GLENN HUGHES

were my exact thoughts when putting these guys together. The reason why I thought Derek Sherinian was a good idea was, after working with him on a Dream Theater album, I thought that the progressive rock element he could bring could introduce an interesting new dynamic to the group."

Sherinian arrives at the studio next, and he too greets his bandmates affectionately. He looks fit and healthy, radiating a cool confidence – a swagger, really – to go along with his newly toned-up physique. "I got divorced and then I hit fifty," he says. "You get to a point where you wanna look good, you know?"

He says he had few expectations when he was first brought into the project. "I got a call from Kevin, who asked if I wanted to record a few songs in Malibu for a couple of days. I knew of Glenn and Jason, but I didn't know Joe at all. We weren't even thinking of doing a whole album at that point, much less anything else."

Those couple of days got extended to a full week, by which time the quartet's song fragments and jams had morphed into an entire album of hard-hitting blues-based hard rock. "It came together so quickly," says Bonamassa. "What started out as this experiment became something bigger. I don't think anybody gave anything much thought until we heard the first mixes, and then we went: 'Wow! This is pretty damn good.' It was classic rock but with new songs. It had that old seventies feel but it didn't sound dated in any way. Once everybody heard it, we all thought: 'I think we might have something here.'"

Patting Bonamassa on the knees, Hughes says: "It was pretty obvious that these four talents together were the right guys at the right time. It was like, okay, now here's a band.'

"Right. But it was never micro-managed," Bonamassa stresses, "like we were in a boardroom or something. So we all decided, okay, we've got something here, let's make it work."

Originally the group had christened themselves Black Country (a reference to the part of the West Midlands where Hughes and Bonham both grew up), but after the threat of legal action from a band based in Baltimore, Maryland, with the same name, they decided to add 'Communion'. BCC's self-titled debut album was released in the autumn of 2010 to rave reviews and immediately picked up brisk sales. "We were all pretty surprised," Sherinian says. "I don't think any of us expected such strong and immediate acceptance. How many bands can make a record and do business right away? We were all pretty excited, and so we wanted to get out there and play."

From the beginning, the question remained about whether BCC could ever manage to be a big gigging band. Although three of the members had various commitments – Hughes toured behind solo albums; Bonham divided his time between Foreigner, Sammy Hagar's The Circle and his own Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Experience; Sherinian, since leaving Dream Theater in 1999, has performed with a variety of acts – all were gung-ho on touring as much as possible. Bonamassa was the stumbling block when it came to extended road work. ⊳

Even before the group recorded their debut album, his solo career as a modern blues master was on the rise. "I'd been making my records since 1999," he says. "I was having success and things were building nicely. In 2008 or 2009, that's when it started to get interesting – the shows were getting bigger. I was like: 'Wow. Looks like this thing I've worked for is finally happening.'"

"Joe was very clear early on that he had a solo career going and that things would need to work around that," Kevin Shirley remembers of Bonamassa's availability to tour. "It was generally understood that his own touring would be a priority – although once things got under way with the band it was all kind of forgotten."

Bonamassa likens his career trajectory at that point to a freight train speeding down the tracks. "You spend your whole life trying to get the train going," he explains. "You try as hard as you can and push as hard as you can, and then suddenly it starts moving. Then it moves faster and faster. The next thing you know, you're flying. I was booked for tours a year or two in advance. What do you do, put the brakes on it? It was a problem."

The demand for BCC dates was growing, and Bonamassa was caught in a bind. "I was like: 'How do I finesse this with them?'" he recalls. "Here I was, this one thing, my solo career, was moving faster and faster, and then this other thing, the band, started taking off in the opposite direction. What was I to do? I can't franchise this thing out."

Given Bonamassa's commitments, BCC managed to play live just four times during their first year together: as an encore during one of Bonamassa's own shows in Riverside, California; for an album release gig in front of a select audience at John Henry's rehearsal studios in London; and two performances in the UK in December 2010, at Wolverhampton Civic Hall and London's Shepherd's Bush Empire.

"Those were some of my favourite gigs I've ever been involved in," Bonamassa enthuses. "That gig at the Wolves was so fucking loud and exhilarating – I'll never forget that moment. It was one of those times when I thought: 'This is what it's really like when something is new and fresh and people are seeing it for the first time.' You don't get that kind of thing too often."

> "That 2010 gig at Wolves was so f**king loud and exhilarating. I'll never forget that moment."
>
> **JOE BONAMASSA**

Hughes cuts in. "I just want to address this once and only once," he says, "because I don't want to hash it through a million times. There were never any problems with us at all. We knew Joe was very busy and we were treading water, so we thought, ' Alright, we'll just have to move forward.' It was as simple as that."

Moving forward meant recording another album, which the group knocked out with Shirley in another week-long blast in early 2011. Although Hughes had a bigger hand in the writing than on their first album, the general consensus was that *Black Country Communion 2* was a stronger communal effort: Bonamassa's arena-sized riffs, Hughes's throaty roar, Sherinian's majestic keyboard flourishes and Bonham's terrific drumming had unified into a sum greater than its parts.

Eventually there was a space on Bonamassa's list of commitments that was big enough to allow for a proper BCC tour. They played just a quick series of dates in the US, but spent considerable time performing in Europe, which was documented on the CD/DVD and Blu-ray release *Live Over Europe*. The shows were greeted rapturously by fans, but as Shirley remembers it, "Things were going off the rails early on. During that European tour there were rubs between Glenn and Joe that were evident. The truth is, Joe was building a very dedicated fan base with his blues records, and was attracting enough people to justify being out solo – playing the kind of venues BCC were playing, but selling them out."

By the end of the run, Hughes had the feeling that the band had overplayed its hand. This suspicion was confirmed when the guys landed at Los Angeles International Airport and were waiting for their bags. "Joe looked at me and said: 'I think next time we should just go out for a couple of weeks,' Hughes recalls. "I could see it in his eye. I knew what he was going for, what he meant: we did thirteen weeks, it was too long."

Bonamassa nods, draws a deep breath and says: "Yeah, it was a long tour. Brutal."

The recording of third album *Afterglow,* in 2012, proceeded much like the band's second – Hughes brought in most of the material and the band hammered out the rest from the various riffs and ideas that were floating around. Bonamassa was by now a bona fide solo sensation, and the demands on his time were piling up. He was also becoming, by his own admission, a bit unglued. "It was overwhelming me," the guitarist states. "I was going from solo album to touring to Black Country Communion

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Above: playing at John Henry's rehearsal studios in London on September 20, 2010 for the launch of BCC's debut album.

album to more touring. I was doing collaborations. I was doing everything that came at me. I really felt like I was on the verge of mentally and physically burning out."

"I was concerned for him," Hughes says softly. "I saw what was happening, and I'd seen it before. I'd seen it take down many people. That success you wish for turns around and bites you."

"There was a six-month period that was really bad," Bonamassa says. "I was at the point where I wanted to say: 'You know what? Gardening is going to be my new career. Fuck this.'"

During the making of *Afterglow*, it was again understood that the opportunities to play live were going to be limited. Hughes claims he was fine with this arrangement, but once he saw that the only post-album release gig on the books was a one-off in Wolverhampton for 2013, he lost it. In an interview just prior to the record's release, he expressed his frustration and even hinted that the album might be the band's swansong due to Bonamassa's heavy road schedule.

"I hate to break it to you, but it just may be," he said at the time, "because I need to be in a band that tours on a regular basis. If I had a magic wand, I would wave it over everybody's head and go: 'Hey, you guys, we're gonna go and do two hundred shows and we're gonna be a huge rock'n'roll band globally.' It's not gonna happen."

> "I was at the point where I wanted to say: 'Gardening is going to be my new career. F**k this.'"
>
> JOE BONAMASSA

Hughes claims that he wasn't trying to use the press to force Bonamassa's hand into touring more: "I was just being honest. I was disgruntled." But when he later complained on Twitter about the high ticket prices for Wolverhampton, things went south, and the mean tweets between him and Bonamassa started. "I'm ready to move on," the guitarist posted. To which Hughes replied: "Me too." The gig at Wolverhampton was cancelled, and for all intents and purposes, Black Country Communion were finished.

Opposite page: killer gigs at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on December 29, 2010 (left) and London's Shepherd's Bush Empire the following night.

Jason Bonham is the last member of the band to arrive at Zlozower's studio today – at last. In the midst of his own Led Zeppelin Experience tour, he got caught up in a flight delay in Cleveland. He takes the travel hassle in stride – "What are ya gonna do?" – and is quickly hustled into a small dressing room where a make-up artist attends to him and Sherinian. Like his legendary father, Bonham is a burly bear of a man. Noting Sherinian's studly calander-man appearance, he chuckles and says: "I tried that workout stuff once. I went running – hated it."

Asked about the cycle of events that led to BCC's implosion in 2012, he lets out an even bigger laugh and says: "Oh, we're going to talk about that stuff? I wasn't involved in it. I was just watching the emails and going: 'Oh, no…' You know, you see this happening, and you're just like, 'C'mon, guys. Really?'"

Sherinian elaborates: "I was doing a performance with Glenn in Armenia when the conflict first started. I didn't think anything much, and I told Glenn: 'Don't worry. It's gonna work out.' I got on a plane and flew back to California, and when I checked my emails I was like: 'Uh-oh…' There were about a hundred of them. When I saw one of them said, 'Fuck you,' I thought, 'Okay, well, I guess it's over.'"

For Bonham, he'd lived through this scenario before following Led Zeppelin's triumphant one-night-only reunion show, with him on drums, at London's O2 Arena in 2007. "People would always say: 'Why is Robert being a dick?' They wanted the band to tour. You know, there's always going to be somebody at fault for a band not working. But when you know what's inside the situation, you can understand things a little better. With Joe, I kind of get ➢

Left: outside John Henry's in September 2010.

"I was probably the chief rug puller back then," he says. "But even if you're the rug puller, you don't want to be told that. When things had built up before, I was thinking: 'My hairline and my ability to have cognizant thoughts are both in jeopardy at this point.' So I just disengaged. I disengaged in the only way Italians know how – to throw a cherry bomb into one's life. That's kind of what I did, and I can now cop to it in the most honest fashion.

"I was a little hot-headed and immature," he continues. "It's something that I'm still guilty of. I spin out over stupid shit. You work on it, especially as you grow older and you see forty coming up. So yeah, one of my limitations is, I get spun out over little shit when I should probably think it through."

He laughs, then adds: "That's another reason why I shouldn't have anything to do with political office. I'd be terrible at it."

it. He's a very successful artist in his own right, so it's hard for him to be expected to take time away from it."

He pauses, then adds, "Of course, it would have been nice to do more… "

For a brief time, Hughes, Sherinian and Bonham considered continuing without Bonamassa. "There was talk of that, yes," Bonham says. "We felt very strongly about this band."

> "We just said: 'If we're gonna do a record, let's do it.' There was no mandate for touring."
>
> DEREK SHERINIAN

Sherinian says the idea went beyond mere talk, and admits that the trio even auditioned another guitarist – although he won't mention whom. "Look, there was a lot of interest in people seeing this band, with or without Joe," he says. "But it didn't feel right with this other guy." He adds quickly: "Joe knows about this, I told him. For a second, he was like: 'I can't believe you guys would do that.' And I said: 'Why wouldn't we?'"

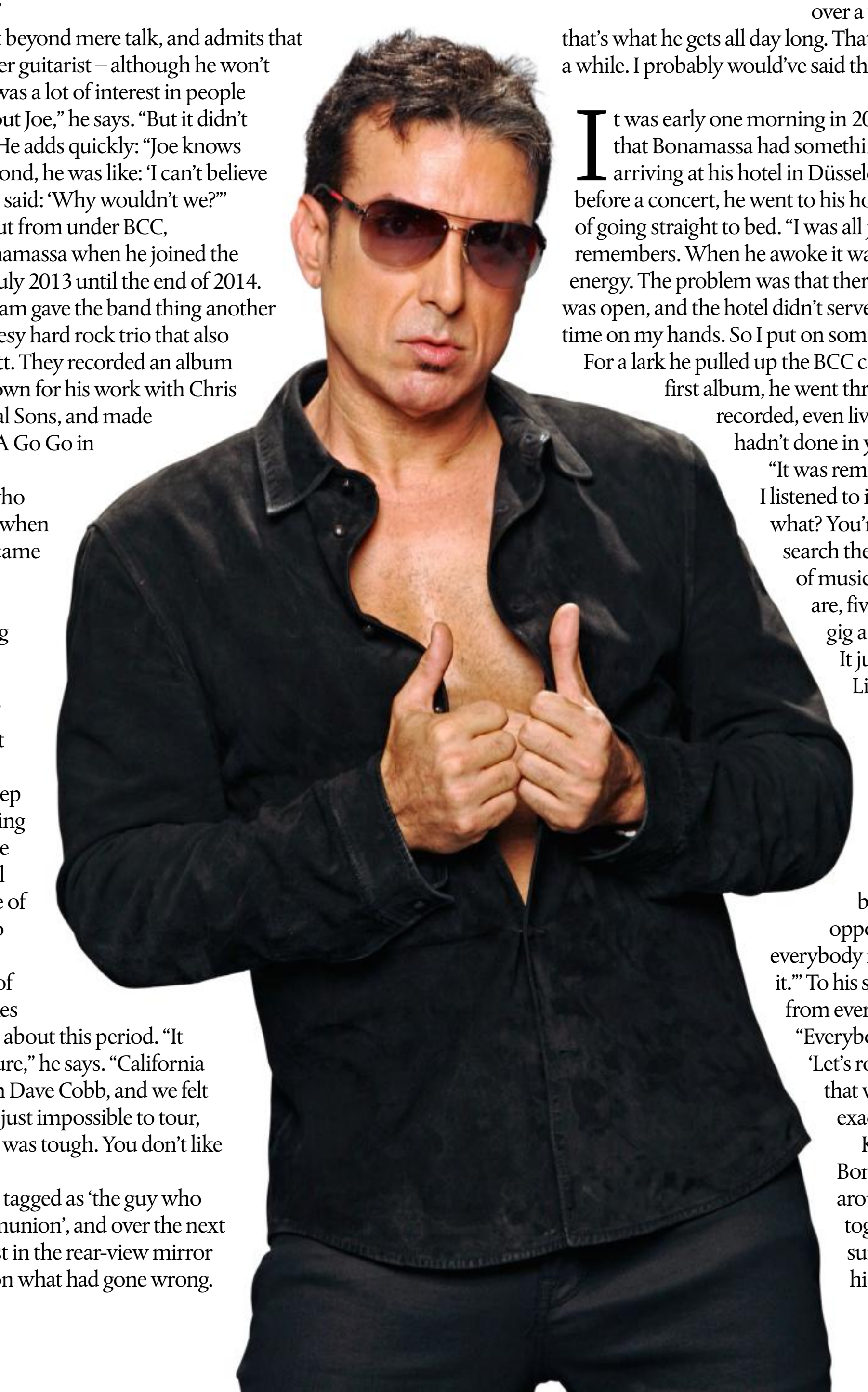
Soon after the bottom fell out from under BCC, Sherinian hooked up with Bonamassa when he joined the guitarist's touring band from July 2013 until the end of 2014. Meanwhile, Hughes and Bonham gave the band thing another go with California Breed, a bluesy hard rock trio that also included guitarist Andrew Watt. They recorded an album with producer Dave Cobb, known for his work with Chris Stapleton, Jason Isbell and Rival Sons, and made their live debut at the Whisky A Go Go in Hollywood in 2014.

Ironically, it was Bonham who pulled out of California Breed when the subject of proper touring came up. "I disagreed with what we were going to do live," he says. "The situation we were looking at was much different than it was for BCC, and I just said: 'Look, I can't tour for nothing.' I'd gotten to a point where that just wasn't possible."

Hughes and Watt tried to keep California Breed alive by bringing in former Queens Of The Stone Age and Eagles Of Death Metal drummer Joey Castillo in place of Bonham, but the band came to an end in early 2015.

Back out in the main room of the photo studio, Hughes shakes his head and sighs when asked about this period. "It was a hard, difficult time, for sure," he says. "California Breed made a great record with Dave Cobb, and we felt really good about it. But it was just impossible to tour, although we did a bit of that. It was tough. You don't like letting these things go."

Bonamassa didn't like being tagged as 'the guy who broke up Black Country Communion', and over the next few years he put the band's past in the rear-view mirror and gained some perspective on what had gone wrong.



One of the issues Bonamassa processed over the years was Hughes's disgruntlement over BCC's touring predicament, and he now says he's able to cut Hughes some slack for his outbursts in the press.

"Glenn was out there trying to promote a record, and he's asked all the time: 'When are you touring?'" he says. "He's doing this press junket over a week or seventeen days, and that's what he gets all day long. That's gotta rattle your nerves after a while. I probably would've said the same things that he did."

It was early one morning in 2016, while on tour in Europe, that Bonamassa had something of an epiphany. After arriving at his hotel in Düsseldorf in the afternoon of the day before a concert, he went to his hotel room and made the mistake of going straight to bed. "I was all jet-lagged and fucked up," he remembers. When he awoke it was four a.m. and he was full of energy. The problem was that there was nothing to do. "Nothing was open, and the hotel didn't serve breakfast till six. I had all this time on my hands. So I put on some music."

For a lark he pulled up the BCC catalogue. Starting with the first album, he went through everything the band had recorded, even live material. It was something he hadn't done in years – and he was riveted.

"It was remarkable," he recalls. "As I listened to it, I started to think: 'You know what? You're an idiot, Joe. Most people search their entire life to find a group of musicians this special, and here we are, five years after playing our last gig and we haven't done anything.' It just seemed so absurd to me. Like, what a waste, you know?"

Bonamassa sent his former bandmates an email expressing this very sentiment. "I said: 'You know what, guys? We make a really good racket when we don't get in our own way. It would be a shame if we never got an opportunity to play again, when everybody is in their prime and is able to do it.'" To his surprise, he received responses from everybody within minutes.

"Everybody was like: 'Let's boogie.' 'Let's rock.' 'I'm in.' I was really happy that we were all on the same page at exactly the same time."

Kevin Shirley says he and Bonamassa had never really tossed around the idea of BCC working together again, and he was surprised when the guitarist sent his message to the band.

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The sky's the limit: BCC playing the High Voltage Festival at Victoria Park, London on July 24, 2011.

"He excluded me on that email, initially," he points out. "I mean, I'm only the producer. I was aware that the band had cost Joe individually a lot of money, and I know that Roy [Weisman], his business partner, would have preferred to keep that curtailed. But Joe is a person who operates on emotion, and he wanted to put the band back together again. He didn't feel they had finished what they had started."

Bonamassa and Hughes met for dinner in New York City around the time that Hughes, with Deep Purple, was being inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, and the two men discussed plans for recording a fourth BCC album. Both agreed that the key to making a strong record was that the writing should be shared equally between them. "I was like: 'Glenn, I'm coming to you this time,'" says Bonamassa. "'I'll get my guitar, I'll get on the freeway and let's get this thing going. Let's get back to the very beginning of this when it was just inspired and focused.'"

"On the first three records – and I counted, too – Joe had only written at my house six times," Hughes says. "That's six times on three records. For this new record he was at my house ten times. That's really speaks to what a true partnership this was."

> "I play the way I play, and so I'll throw a *Black Dog* lick in here and there or whatever."
>
> JASON BONHAM

Both men allow that their writing sessions got off to a shaky start ("We had nothing at first," says Hughes, "and we didn't pull out old riffs from five years ago"), but after a couple of days they felt the spark of their old chemistry and got on a roll. Sitting side by side with guitars, they soon found that they were writing a song a day. "The best part was how we would finish each other's sentences," Bonamassa recalls. "If I came in with a bridge, Glenn would be right there with a chorus, and vice versa."

After a few weeks, the bulk of the album was laid out in front of them. There was the grandiose, thundering rock of *The Last Song For My Place*, the sweeping, yearning, widescreen pop of *Wonderlust* and the riff-monster behemoth *Collide*. For the galloping, urgent sizzler *Awake*, Bonamassa worked up a dizzying, curlicue guitar line that's about as far away from Howlin' Wolf as you can get. "A funny thing happens when I write with Glenn," Bonamassa says. "I take off my blues hat and I put on my classic rock hat. I don't even have to think about it. Different riffs start flying out."

One riff in particular gave the guitarist a moment of concern, however, on the stomping power-rocker *The Crow*, built on a massive guitar figure that's equal parts Jimmy Page and Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello. Before recording, Bonamassa noticed that it bore too much of a resemblance to RATM's *Bulls On Parade*, so it was amended slightly. "The similarity wasn't lost on us," he notes.

In January this year, the band and Shirley convened at EastWest Studios in Los Angeles and laid down everything Bonamassa and Hughes had written in a record four days. They had planned on spending a solid week in the studio, but Hughes had to cut his time short to fly to England to see his ailing mother (she passed away soon afterwards). "To tell you the truth, we could have spent two or three weeks in the studio and wound up with the same record," he says. "You don't always get better results hammering away at something once it's finished. We knew what we were doing and we were ready."

Some songs, however, did change significantly once the band began jamming on them. Hughes and Bonamassa both point to *Sway* as an example. In its recorded form, the track has a mystical and unmistakable *Kashmir*-like quality to it. "That's not the way it started at all," Hughes explains. "I wrote it as more of an uptempo thing, kind of like Michael Jackson's *Smooth Criminal*. We showed it to Jason and he went: 'How about just changing that a little bit?' It took on more of a Zeppelin vibe, but it's still got a bit of Michael to it as well."

Bonamassa laughs. "That stuff just happens," he says, "but it's not like we say to Jason: 'Hey, can you do a Zeppelin thing here?' But, you know, the guy can't help it. He's got a thing in his DNA that no one else has. Every drummer in the world who has mastered the John Bonham style of drumming will never have that element of blood. I mean, you could bring in an Eastern Latvian folk polka and he'll figure out a way to make it sound like *When The Levee Breaks*."

If it was up to Bonham, he would have put more of a Zeppelin spin on the album. "Oh yeah, I do a couple of those things," he says, "and I'm quite proud of them. You know, I play the way I play, and so I'll throw a *Black Dog* lick in here and there or whatever. The hardest thing about recording with Kevin is I never get to redo my drums. He has his way of doing it, and it's like drum tracks are made by an editor sometimes. It pisses me off."

When asked how recording the new album differed from previous BCC albums, Sherinian braces for a moment, then responds snarkily: "The biggest difference was that Jason and I were excluded from the writing process." As an aside, he adds: "I'm just happy that you can finally hear me in the mix."

Bonamassa later seems surprised that the issue of group songwriting came up. "I didn't think it was so big a deal," he says. "It's not like Glenn and I go in there and ▷

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say: 'Here's our songs, they have to go this way.' It's not like that at all. Songs change and people contribute. If you're that married to a song, save it for your solo career, you know?"

Shirley sees the matter this way: "I feel Jason and Derek should have been included more, but in my opinion they sometimes cut off their noses to spite the face. Derek and Jason, and even me on the odd occasion, offer really interesting collaborations and insights to the material, but Glenn is definitely the key writer in the band. And he's very, very talented and good at it, too. Joe writes entirely differently for BCC than he does for himself – it's kind of almost storytelling, an Iron Maiden-like thing.

"I don't think Glenn enjoys being confrontational," he continues, "and there's also some pretty bad writing that gets submitted. Every bone in his body is saying: 'This is shit,' but he doesn't want to offend people. Glenn is actually pretty funny. He doesn't love all the progressive rock stuff, and whenever those solos come around, he likens it to trolls and leprechauns dancing. Jason is one of the most amazing musicians you could meet. He has so many ideas that it's tough to rein him in, and I think it's a mistake to have excluded him. But he does it to himself by being very difficult to get a hold of sometimes."

The afternoon is drawing to a close as the four band members gather together for group and individual photos. After a series of indoor ones are snapped, the guys head outside and hang out on Sunset Boulevard as photographer Neil Zlozower continues to click away. Hughes keeps everybody giggling with a steady stream of ribald jokes, all of which seem to end with the same punchline: "Well, it isn't gonna suck itself!"

So far there are no BCC gigs on the books for 2017, although the band ares scheduled to play three shows in the early part of next year – two UK dates and one aboard an ocean liner as part of

Does the world need another supergroup? When it's as good as this one, yes.

Bonamassa's annual Blues At Sea Cruise. Somewhat surprisingly, the matter of touring wasn't a deal-breaker when Bonamassa first proposed the idea of re-forming. "We didn't set any conditions of any kind," Sherinian says. "We just said: 'If we're gonna do a record, let's do it.' There was no mandate for touring."

Hughes, in the past the most keen member to tour, now says he's adopted a 'whatever happens happens' credo regarding the future of Black Country Communion.

"The key to my life these days is that I have no expectations," he explains. "I bear no resentments. I do this one day at a time, knowing full well that what we did on album number four made me a better human being. I'm going to keep doing things the same way. I'm so glad we did this one because it's brought us closer together. I just feel blessed to play with these guys."

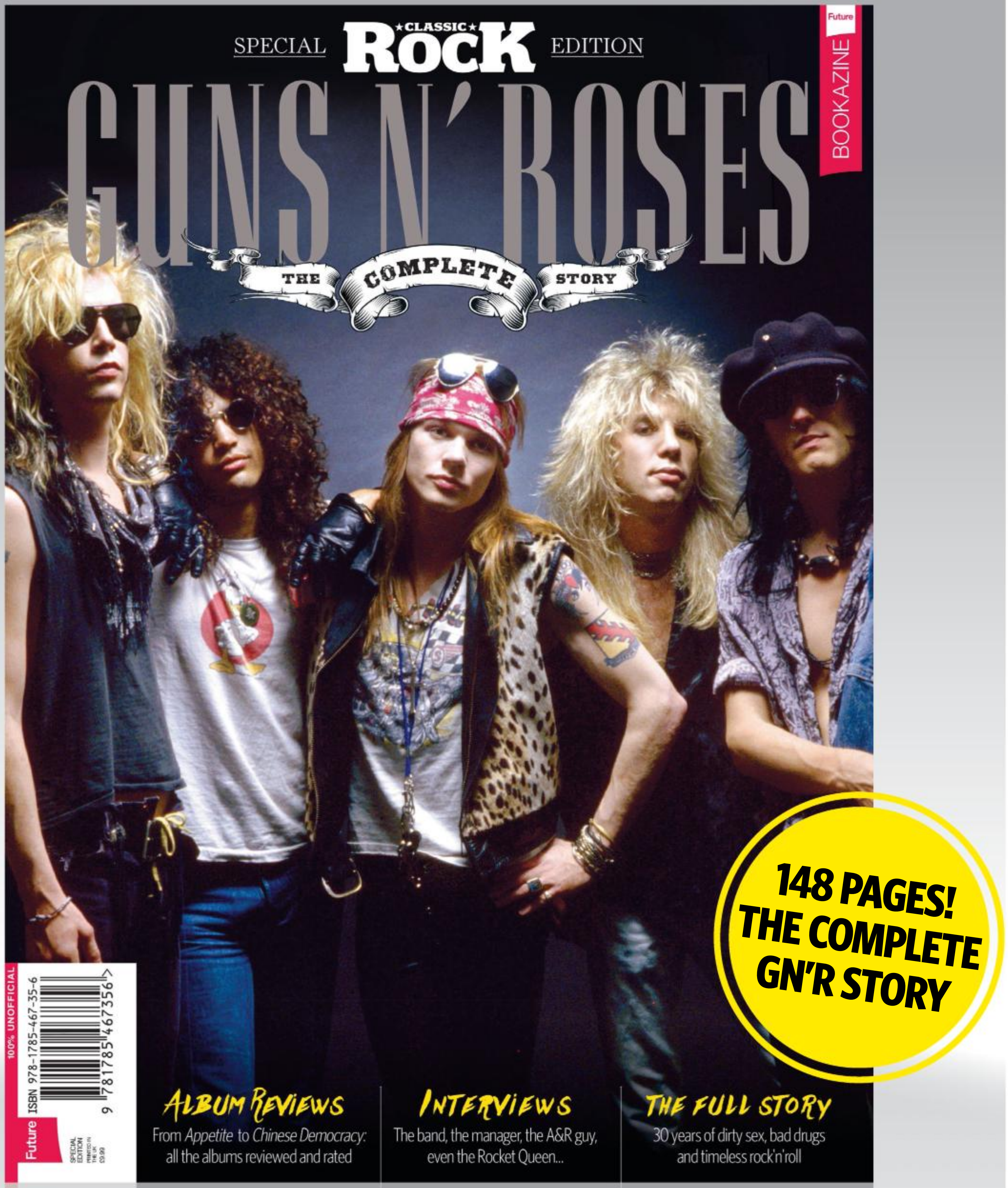
> "You can't erase the past, but I don't want to be one of those guys who takes shit to the grave."
>
> JOE BONAMASSA

So that means no more mean tweets? Hughes laughs. "No," he says, "there will be none of that going on."

"Here's the deal," says Bonamassa. "You can't erase the past, but I don't want to be one of those guys who takes shit to the grave. Fuck that. This goes back to that morning I sent the email to everybody. It's like I woke up and said to myself: 'Self, life is way too short to keep this burdensome shit going. We had fun in 2010. We had fun in 2011 and 2012, and we had a blast making the new album. So as long as that lasts, let's keep doing this.'

"The world doesn't need a bunch of bitter old coots making music by obligation," he concludes. "You have that with other bands, but who needs it? There's too much content out there already. But if a band wants to make music and they come out of the gate with the right record? Hey, the world can use that. I'm really proud that we've all gotten to this place together."

IV is out now via Mascot Records and is reviewed on p90.



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"Whatever the pressure on Marc was, it created one of the best T.Rex albums of all."

Producer Tony Visconti

SOLID GOLD EASY ACTION

Put a rock star under enough pressure and they'll crumble or create diamonds. Producer Tony Visconti recalls his time in the studio with **Marc Bolan** and **T.Rex**, recording *The Slider* and *Tanx*.

Words: **Chris Roberts**

It's spring 1972 and Marc Bolan, the rest of T.Rex and producer Tony Visconti – who tells this story – are in a limo travelling from Orly airport to the 18th-century Château d'Hérouville (recently kitted out as a residential studio facility) close to Paris for a crucial recording session. Bolan is swigging liberally from a bottle of Courvoisier and waywardly improvising a blues song. *'I'm an old bulldog,'* he repeats, not getting any further with the lyrics. He tries to cajoles everybody to join in, but they're not in the mood. They shuffle awkwardly and find something out of the window to pretend to look at. "Everybody sing *'I'm an old bulldog!'*" Bolan exhorts. "Come on, you c**ts!" Eventually percussionist Mickey Finn acquiesces. The others are too irritated and demoralised to comply.

Upon arrival at the Château, at first things don't improve. Bolan wants "the star's bedroom", failing to grasp that that's the owner's room. At the dining table he hurries the band along, telling them he's not paying them to eat, he's paying them to make a record. As they're still on £75 a week and Visconti's royalty has recently been halved, the camp is not a happy one.

"With *The Slider* we must have convinced a few people who criticise me for producing 'samey' singles that we have some extra dimensions."

Marc Bolan

"Marc had started to drink," Visconti recalls, talking to *Classic Rock* today. "He became quite intimidating towards the band. It reached the point where they were almost frightened to look into his eyes. A kind of weirdness descended upon us. I sometimes felt I was ready to leave at any moment. He didn't turn on me… and wisely so. So I stayed. But he had a very short temper then. *Electric Warrior* [T.Rex's 1971 album] had been so great – we'd been happy-go-lucky. And we were so grateful that we'd had *Hot Love* and *Get It On* both at number one for weeks on end. The spirit was absolutely great. But now it got… strange."

Yet from these inauspicious beginnings, the subsequent sessions, at which the bulk of the new album they were working on was recorded, resulted in one of the Mount Rushmore landmarks of popular rock.

"Y'know, good things happened and bad things happened," Visconti says philosophically. "By the end we'd had a great time, really. Whatever that pressure on Marc was, it created one of the best T.Rex albums of all. I really have huge fondness and affection for it. Great songs, some great sonic tricks. You listen to that album and Marc Bolan truly was… ingenious."

Released in July '72, *The Slider* strode in on the back of *Telegram Sam* and *Metal Guru*, two of the most vibrant sparks of impishness the *Top Of The Pops* chart has ever known. Disappointingly, however, the album peaked at No.4 in the UK, just scraping into the Top 20 in the US. As a result, Bolan, with his patented blend of braggadocio and insecurity, was scared that the supernova status he'd attained – after all the years of wild mutations as a folkie, a mod and then going electric – might be slipping away as quickly as it had come. He told the *NME* at the time: "What people do with you in their own minds you can't stop… but I'd be very upset if the press wrote me off as anything less than a musician and a poet. If there's going to be any kind of revolution in music, it must come from young people. If you ignore them, you're cutting yourself off from the life force. With *The Slider* we must have convinced a few people who criticise me for producing 'samey' singles that we have some extra dimensions."

To a teenage fan discovering the sexy, motivational joy of music, these records were indeed a revolution in the head. T.Rex had sold 16 million records in less than a year and a half – around four per cent of all singles sold in the UK during that period were theirs. No-square, corkscrew-hair, natural-born star Bolan, along with his pal/rival Ziggy, had, as far as those of us in the schoolyard were concerned, blown away old 60s relics such as the Stones, Dylan and The Beatles forever. Surely they'd never come back from this all-conquering, other-worldly thunder-crack of racy riffs and mad poetry.

Tony Visconti has been a key element in the room for some of the most significant moments in rock's lifetime, from the Tyrannosaurus Rex albums, through Bowie's golden years, via digressions with Thin Lizzy, Sparks, Iggy, the Stranglers, Adam Ant, Manic Street Preachers *et al*, right through to Bowie's magnificent *Blackstar* swansong. Taking a break from being busy in an LA studio, he casts his mind back to late '71/early '72 and muses that it was "a strange point in Marc's career".

The breakthrough success of *Electric Warrior* meant that when its sales finally began to slow, "we felt we needed to fill the void. Or Marc did. He had this anxiety to make a new album immediately. So he was drinking heavily, worried about the finances. We had only four days booked, but if my memory serves me well, we recorded seventeen songs in those days. We were working pretty much from the minute we woke up to very late at night, every day."

Was Bolan unsettled by the sudden and massive rush of T.Rextasy? Wasn't that what he'd been craving for years?

"Yeah, but he felt this imposition of having to come up with another hit album. And fame fuelled that fire. *Hot Love* and *Get It On* had been so very big everywhere. After that kind of elation, y'know, there's always… a hole. Even I had a feeling of that. We really felt we had a job to do. It had to be every bit as good. And I think it was. We accomplished that. *The Slider* is acknowledged as one of his greatest."

The album's calling cards roared in with irresistible swaggers of confidence – the correct use of ego. *Telegram Sam* and *Metal Guru* project successful, strutting bravado. They're established as tablets from Moses now, but at the time seemed alien, daring and counter-intuitive. That fusion of stomping rock grooves, grandiose strings and stratosphere-high backing vocals brought a new dimension to music.

On *The Slider,* Bolan also confirmed that he could drive hard (*Buick MacKane*, which Guns N' Roses covered; *Chariot Choogle*) and deliver dreamy, trippy, self-referencing mooches (*Spaceball Ricochet*, the Lennon and Dylan namechecking *Ballrooms Of Mars*).

Visconti shares that Bolan, prone to singing about black cats, had developed a superstition or two. "Strings were a superstition for Marc. After he'd realised his first two hits had strings on, I asked if he was aware I hadn't put any on *Get It On*. And he paled. ▷

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Getting it on: Bolan and bassist Steve Currie in the studio.

Tanx commanders: Tony Visconti (left) and Marc Bolan at the Château d'Hérouville, October 23, 1972.

He urged me to write something on the spot, which I did. So I don't think you'll find a heyday T.Rex single without strings on it. Even *Jeepster*: okay, it didn't have violins, but it had cellos. And a bassoon, I might add.

"I mean, *Metal Guru* was just crazy good. A kitchen-sink mix, I remember. By which I mean very, very difficult to mix. Because another superstition Marc had was that we had to have two guys singing in falsetto. That was, of course, Flo & Eddie [Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, former Turtles and Mothers Of Invention], who'd come into our lives on a song called *Seagull Woman* on the *T.Rex* album of 1970. Marc always had to have them on board. So by this time, all these external sources – the strings, their voices – were a key part of the T.Rex sound. Which of course proved problematic when Marc went on tour with just the four-piece band."

Live, T.Rex were a different entity. More raw and rough-edged, sure, but hardly lacking fireworks, as the contemporaneous T.Rex documentary film *Born To Boogie* captured. Ringo Starr famously directed that, and today Visconti chuckles as he acknowledges an old debate. I ask if he stands by his claim in his autobiography that it was he – not Ringo – who took the iconic cover photos of a top-hatted Bolan on the sleeve of *The Slider*.

"I certainly did! We'd had long breaks while shooting *Born To Boogie* while Ringo set up different scenes, so Marc gave me his Nikon F camera and we walked out into the woods and I shot three rolls of film. So back in London I'm at Marc's flat and I see the contact sheets and say: "Oh, those are all the ones I took." He had a funny look on his face, and goes: "Oh, right. Well, initial the sheets and if I ever use them, I'll give you a credit." Of course, three months later he conveniently forgot and credited them to Ringo. I mean, this is my recollection of how things went down. If Ringo wants to challenge me on it, he's welcome."

> **"Bolan was one of the best lyricists I ever worked with. His songs were both catchy and brilliant."**
>
> Tony Visconti

Kind reviews for *The Slider* did not come as easily as Bolan had hoped. "Startlingly bad by any conventional critical standards," grumbled Charles Shaar Murray in the *NME*. He continued: "Dangerously close to a total artistic collapse… a colossal drag. Here, Marc is just not trying." He even panned Visconti's "mediocre" strings and production.

Richard Williams in *The Times* was less cruel. Praising Visconti, he observed that "*The Slider* is… wondrous to behold. The hushed intimacy of Bolan's vocal delivery helps to make one word do the work of ten, particularly when combined with his gift of coining oddly appealing images."

The New York Times said: "Mr. Bolan has a certain fey charm that in the end defies analysis."

That's the thing with T.Rex: whether you got it or not, they had it.

Visconti recalls that the happiest moments were late-night parties at the Château d'Hérouville, when "the French wine would kick in and we'd listen to the playback of the songs we'd done that day. We'd run around the building, having a ball. That was the fun part. It was worth all the stress to hear that these tracks were… scintillating."

Bolan's gusto meant the band rarely knew what they were playing until he opened up his book of lyrics and started a new song. Drummer Bill Legend felt frustrated that he'd just be finding his way around one when Bolan would shoo the band on to the next. But as Visconti suggests: "At night you'd listen back and not care about any loose 'mistakes', because you'd hear something so fresh and alive. Even to me that's more important."

And the feel, he agrees, was fostered because Legend and bassist Steve Currie were a heaven-sent rhythm section for Bolan. "Oh yeah. Fabulous musicians, those guys. Deeply underrated."

Whether it was a nervous reaction to the sniffy reviews and the album's failure to make No.1 or a fevered rush of creative energy, Bolan hauled T.Rex back to the Château later that year to record another, which became *Tanx*, released in January '73.

A typically garrulous Bolan had told journalist Keith Altham: "All I really want to be is myself. All the lunacy and merchandising going on around me are nothing to do with me – I mean, Bolan pillows? Please, people! Sometimes I feel all these things are something I'm meant to go through in some weird, fatalistic way. I honestly feel it could all end tomorrow. Not just the band thing – I mean

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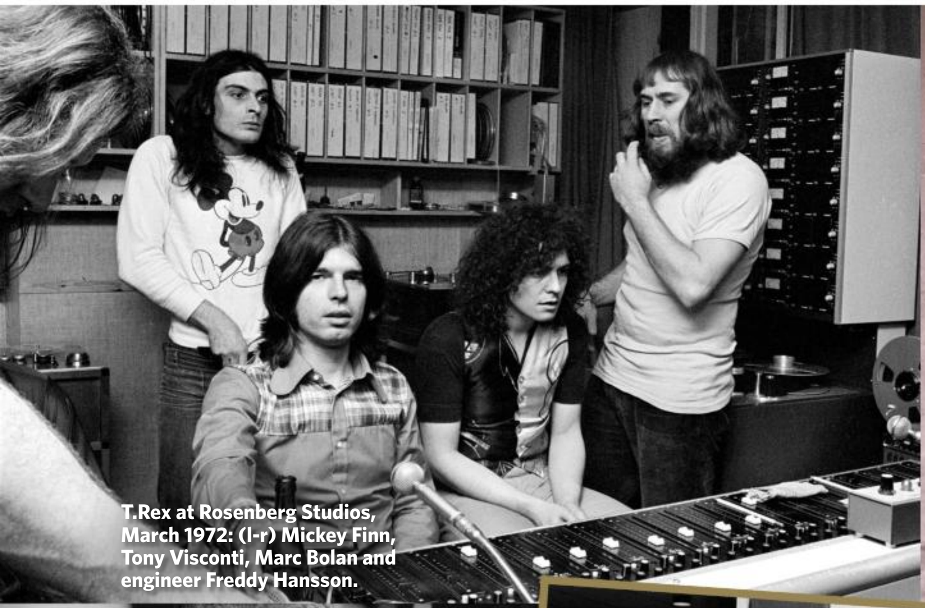

T.Rex at Rosenberg Studios, March 1972: (l-r) Mickey Finn, Tony Visconti, Marc Bolan and engineer Freddy Hansson.

Bolan at the Château d'Hérouville, October 1972.

Visconti with the "ingenious" Bolan.

life. But what will be will be. People tell me to take a holiday because I'm going to kill myself. But I just can't, I can't."

Perhaps revealing that cosmic subconscious awareness of mortality, between tours Bolan was recording with such prolific inspiration that he could leave off *Tanx* the classic singles *Children Of The Revolution, Solid Gold Easy Action* and *20th Century Boy*. Visconti cites Bolan's genuine consideration for his fans: he didn't like them "paying twice" for hits, and he habitually released three-track "maxi-singles".

A musical departure, the album embraced twisted elements of soul, funk and gospel. Ironically, the press cliché that T.Rex records were "samey" just kept droning on, missing the point. American reviews were more alert, however, with *Creem* saying "song for song, Bolan's strongest album". For the first time, they used female backing vocalists (Visconti reckons Flo & Eddie left because they weren't getting paid), and a Mellotron and saxophones infiltrated the T.Rex sound. Tracks such as the wistful *Electric Slim And The Factory Hen* and frank ballad *Broken Hearted Blues* moved into new emotional pastures. *Tanx* jumps from style to style, but what confused listeners then is what makes it still magical today.

The mood at the Château was better this time. "More relaxed," says Visconti. "I remember that little French girl, the record label guy's daughter, saying: 'Donna la Folle… par T.Rex,' at the start of *Mad Donna*, in her beautiful accent. And I enjoyed messing about with the Mellotron – that's me warming up at the start of *Tenement Lady*. Thing is, most British artists at the time, including David Bowie, were in love with soul and funk music – Funkadelic, all that. So Marc had this interest in sounding more 'cool', more hip, y'know? He certainly had the rhythm in him; he knew that genre well. Gloria Jones [American singer-songwriter, soon to be Bolan's girlfriend] hadn't entered the scene yet. She was there for the next one, *Zinc Alloy*. But he was heading in that direction, for sure."

Tanx's epic finale, *Left Hand Luke And The Beggar Boys*, bends the shapes of gospel to Bolan's will. It was influenced by *Montague The Magnificent*, an eponymous 60s single by a New York R&B DJ who 'rapped', or sermonised, over melodramatic backing.

"I think every good rock band has the spirit of T.Rex in their DNA. You can hear it from Guns N' Roses to U2 to Foo Fighters."

Tony Visconti

"Yeah, he loved that," Visconti reminisces fondly. "I'd made a copy of it for him. He and Bowie used to come back to my flat in Earls Court and I'd play all my American soul records to them. We used to play that track over and over."

(It's worth noting that *Tanx* was released two years before Bowie's *Young Americans*.)

Bolan was still mean with giving credits, though. "He said: 'I'm not going to give you credit for string arrangements, playing guitar, bass… because then your name would appear more than mine on the sleeve," Visconti remembers.

None of these character flaws alter the fact that *Tanx* is another jewel. Visconti, its producer, who would return to the Château d'Hérouville to make further history with Bowie, is keen to stress that Bolan's lyrics "were always so colourful and imaginative. He was one of the best lyricists I ever worked with. And the way he'd set them across a backing… he really got the balance right. His songs were both catchy and brilliant. Even though it's inaccurate, I always think of *Electric Warrior, The Slider* and *Tanx* as the first three albums, and they're timeless classics.

"You hear stuff on the radio now that sounds like them because people are recording a little more minimally again. I think every good rock band has the spirit of T.Rex in their DNA. Every one. You can hear it from Guns N' Roses to U2 to Foo Fighters. They all have a touch of T.Rex.

"Marc wrote the primer for how to make a great rock'n'roll track. And co-created glam rock too. I'm so proud of everything I did with him. He just did everything right in this period. Kids will still be playing and loving these records long after we're all gone. They'll survive."

The Slider and Tanx are available now on Edsel & Demon Records as part of their T.Rex 40/70 Legacy campaign.

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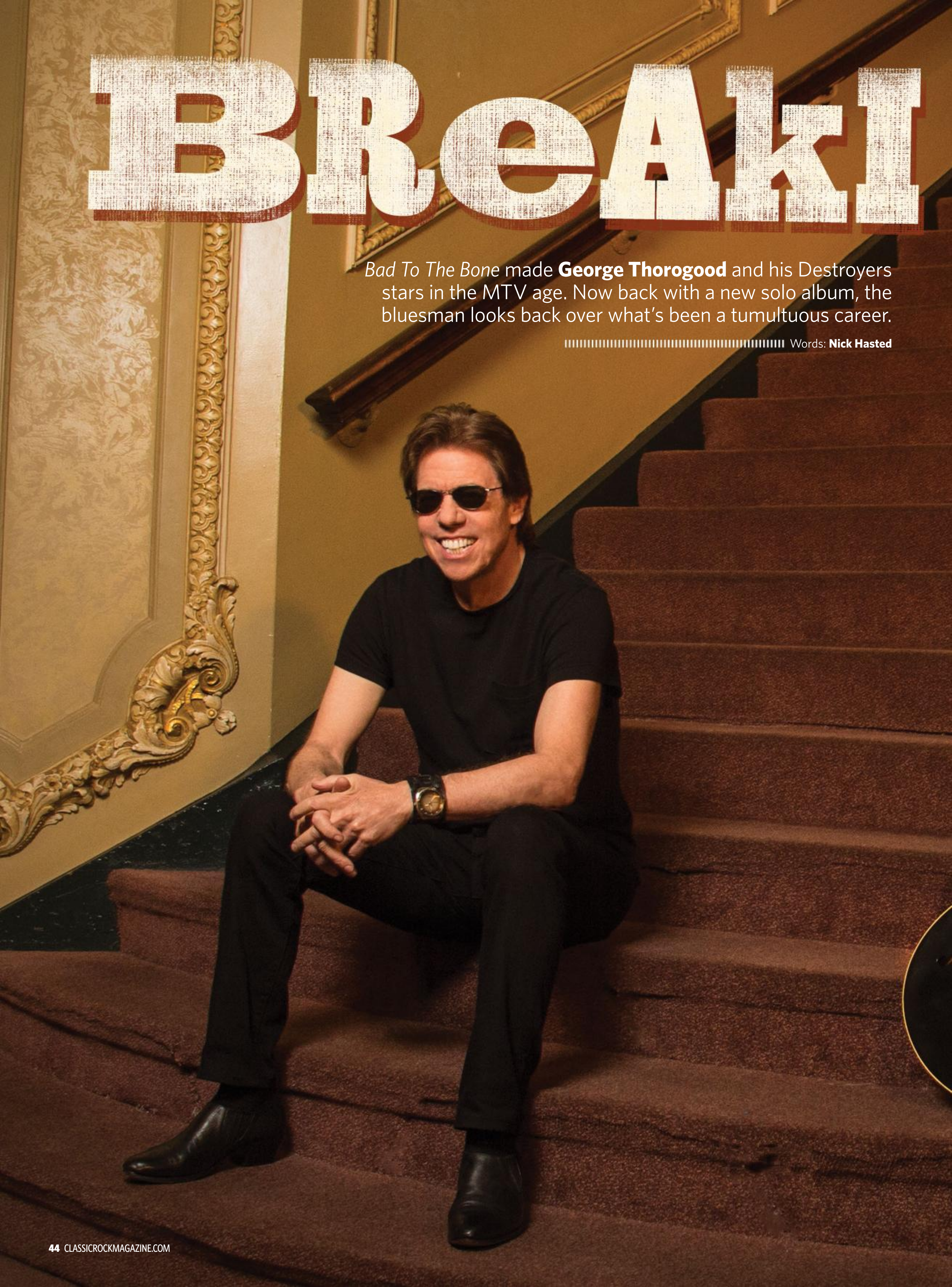

BREAKI

Bad To The Bone made **George Thorogood** and his Destroyers stars in the MTV age. Now back with a new solo album, the bluesman looks back over what's been a tumultuous career.

Words: **Nick Hasted**

Ng Bad

If it's Friday, this must be the Museum of Ballooning in New Jersey, the latest turn off the road for George Thorogood And The Destroyers and their deep-rooted blues bar-band boogie. "We're not playing near any of the balloons," Thorogood assures us, such quirks of the schedule barely registering this far into a career that began with him nearly starving on the streets of San Francisco.

In the 80s, Thorogood and his band reached the heights of playing the US Live Aid concert, and shared bills with fans Dylan and the Stones. Thorogood's signature song *Bad To The Bone*, which brought 1950s R&B into the MTV age – equally recalling Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, the young, stuttering speed-freak Roger Daltrey and *Howlin' Wolf* – remains a soundtrack staple, and Thorogood's sole self-written classic. Running variations of it (*Born To Be Bad*), while further exploring the blues songbook with which he first made his name, secured his American stardom for the decade.

Even during his greatest fame, though, Thorogood's blues was never in fashion. Not having Springsteen's songwriting chops and ability to conjure new directions, he was more a throwback to the blues-honouring, covers-heavy early (and recent) Stones. His reasons for making new records petered out. "The Destroyers and I have kind of levelled off over the last few years," Thorogood says of their professional situation.

Always true to himself, just as he has been to his wife Marla for 36 years, such reliability could look like a rut.

In 2017, though, one more turn of his trusted formula has been found – and it's a revelation. At the age of 67, Thorogood has just released his first ever solo album, *Party Of One*, a one-man show that sets his strengths in sharp relief. Covering key influences from Johnny Cash to John Lee Hooker, he brings out the character of each with a fine actor's skill and conviction.

The mostly acoustic record rolls back to his formative years when, as he told interviewers in the 70s, he was "basically an acoustic guitarist". He has also returned to his original record label, Rounder, and most successful producer, Jim Gaines. Typically for a man whose career has mixed iron determination with meek self-deprecation, Thorogood needed to be gently cajoled to make it.

"I wanted to make an acoustic solo album some day," he says, "and Rounder got interested a few years back. It was a little more strenuous playing without the Destroyers. It's so damn hard physically. I'd get halfway through a song and my hands would be tired, because I wasn't accustomed to doing this any more. I'd start off way too fast, or too heavy, or too hard, and then I'd stop. About halfway through I thought: 'I'm going to ditch this project, it's too hard, and I can't come up with enough songs.' Rounder and Jim were very supportive. 'We know you can do this. There's no rush.'"

Those struggles aren't apparent on *Party Of One*. In a *Rolling Stone* review of Thorogood's 1977 debut *George Thorogood And The Destroyers*, critic Greil Marcus summed up the general opinion of Thorogood's journeyman credentials as a guitarist thus: "To hear George Thorogood flail his slide up and down his guitar, you might have thought he was Ben Franklin – that he'd discovered not the blues, but electricity." Now his playing is unassumingly expressive, the sound of someone who's been doing this all his life.

If you think you have to write songs to make them personal, meanwhile, listen to Thorogood's take on *Soft Spot*, written by veteran country songwriter Gary Nicholson and Allen Shamblin, and to the feeling with which he sings about the destitute. Insisting that *'We can't treat 'em like being broke is some kind of crime'*, he ends with his own bare plea: *'Help them.'*

"I live in the United States of America, that prides itself on being maybe the richest country in the world," he says, "and I can't believe that there are adult people living in the streets here, thousands of them. I try to explain this to my daughter, and I have no answer. I don't know whether it's shelter or jobs. I'm not a politician.

"But the question keeps nagging at me. So I was thinking it's up to us regular working-class people to help these people out, because the government's not helping. I was all about that anyway, before I heard the song. So I said: 'I've gotta do this.' Even though I don't play it all that good – it's a little out of my style. But the message isn't out of my style."

"I got my ass kicked for being among the three or four Stones fans in town."

George Thorogood was put on his path on May 20, 1965, when the Rolling Stones appeared on the US TV show *Shindig!*, and insisted that Howlin' Wolf came on with them. Brian Jones told Mick Jagger to "shut up" as the Wolf growled *How Many More Years*, danced with improbable speed and grace, and introduced racially schismed America to the blues as a force of nature.

"Wilmington, Delaware was like living on the set of [idealised suburban sitcom] *Leave It To Beaver*," Thorogood says of his north-eastern origins, still recognisable in his sometimes drawled Yankee words. "I was like: 'I don't fit in with these people, man,'" he says of the other inhabitants of

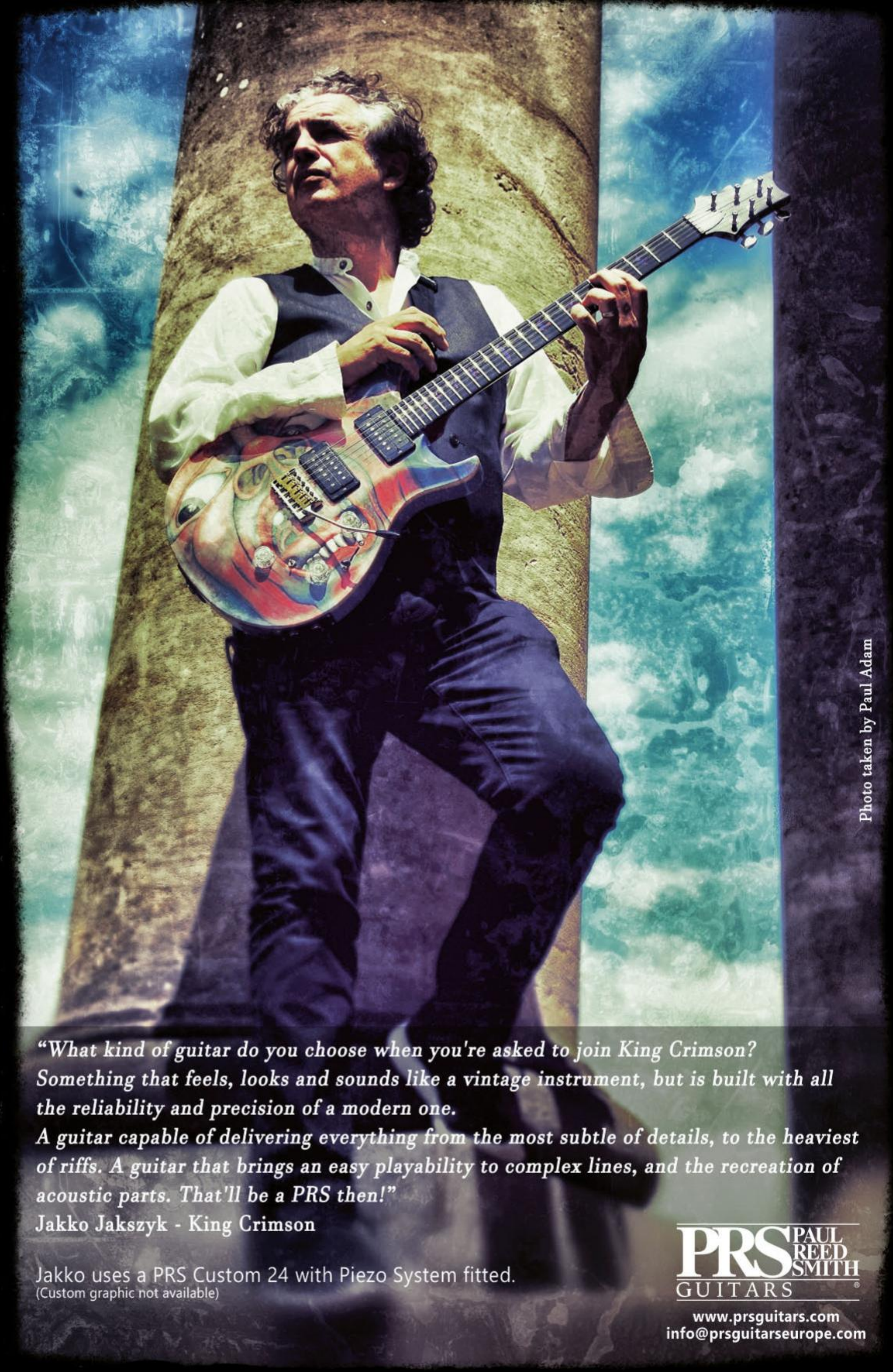
Photo taken by Paul Adam
"What kind of guitar do you choose when you're asked to join King Crimson?
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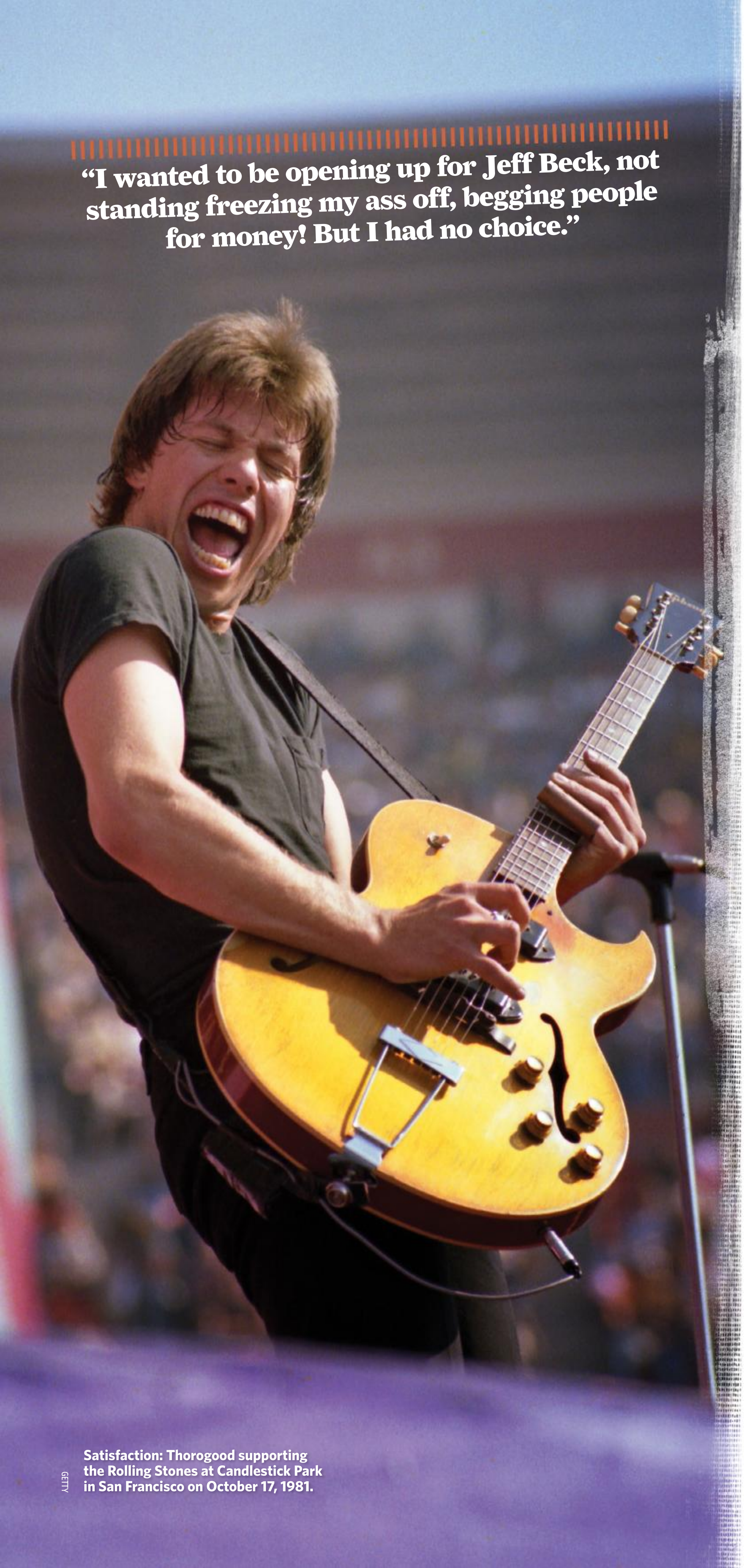

"I wanted to be opening up for Jeff Beck, not standing freezing my ass off, begging people for money! But I had no choice."

Satisfaction: Thorogood supporting the Rolling Stones at Candlestick Park in San Francisco on October 17, 1981.

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Wilmington back then, he recalls with a laugh that "I got my ass kicked" for being among the "three or four" Stones fans in town. "It was the world of the Beach Boys versus the world of the Rolling Stones. It was John Wayne versus John Lennon. That's how it was divided. We were saying this is groovy stuff that's happening, and it's big stuff. 'Oh, the Stones'll never last.'

Howlin' Wolf, meanwhile, made him dig beneath the Stones, and to realise that the blues was what he wanted to play.

In his high-school yearbook, Thorogood was voted unanimously the boy least likely to succeed. It gives an idea of Wilmington's fear and loathing for rock'n'roll misfits, and his bad need to get out.

There was some travelling along the way, including to England, before he arrived in San Francisco as a 23-year-old street musician in the winter of 1973. His sympathies on *Soft Spot* make even more sense when you hear how this went.

"I was hungry," he says. "If I didn't play, I didn't eat. I wanted to be in a top-of-the-line nightclub opening up for Jeff Beck, not standing freezing my ass off, begging people for money! But I had no choice. It was for two and a half, three months, which doesn't sound that long. If I didn't have any gigs, we'd go to a coffee house and pass the hat, or play a song to get a hamburger. But most of the time I was on the street corner playing music. If the sun moved, I moved with it. It was just something I had to do, or I'd starve."

He was sleeping "wherever anyone would put me up. Sometimes I'd just walk the streets, or get the all-night trolley car. Sometimes you just walked all night and waited till the dawn, and found a comfortable place in the park and caught a nap. It was pretty rough. I needed to go to a dentist. 'If I don't get some money, my teeth are going to fall out, and I'm gonna be *doomed*.' That was the thing that bothered me. That was scary.

"It wasn't like I was ignored in San Francisco," he explains. "It just took time to circle round clubs enough so they would hire me."

Just as his graft paid off, a tape of his set got him on a bill with Bonnie Raitt, whose manager lured him back east, where a support slot in Boston with two of his blues heroes, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, got him a club gig for a couple of years. There he supported and hung around bluesmen.

"It was the music that connected us," he says of these men from another world to his, even "another century", thanks to their racistly blighted lives. "When I started playing the guitar, they started listening. They all said: 'You've got the right idea.' That was the best thing I could hear. Some guys, like Sonny, even wanted to give me a couple of bucks. 'Man, keep your money…' So they'd buy me a sandwich instead.

"Robert Lockwood especially took kind of a shine to me. We all knew who he was and what he stood for [Lockwood had played with Robert Johnson]. And so did he. The only thing Lockwood suggested strongly was to get an electric guitar. He said: 'That's the way you make money. That's the way to get it going.'"

In 1973, Thorogood formed the Destroyers with school friend Jeff Simon on drums, Ron Smith on rhythm guitar (these days Jim Suhler's job) and, from 1976, bassist Billy Blough. The then-folk label Rounder let him make a blues record, but were considerably less keen to release it. "I was

George Thorogood (front) with The Destroyers.

working on that in seventy-four, but we didn't get it out till the end of seventy-seven," he says. "I felt I got to the big time a couple of years late."

When it was finally released, the songs audiences had loved at his gigs – such as *One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer*, and Hank Williams's *Move It On Over* – did their work on vinyl, too, making *George Thorogood And The Destroyers* a gold-selling US hit.

Thorogood was 28 when his struggles started to pay off. "I was trying hard not to lose my mind," he says. "I'd been waiting so long for this to happen, and the whole thing seemed to be backfiring. The record came out way past the deadline I had set for myself. A lot of the opportunities I'd looked forward to were gone. I wanted to play at the Fillmore East and Fillmore West, but they'd closed down. I'd thought it'd be cool to open for the Allmans, but Duane Allman had passed away. The things that were happening big were punk rock and disco. It was very rough going in the first couple of years. But I thought: 'I've worked too hard to get to this spot. I'm going to hang in there.'"

"Nobody ever paid any attention until I got on that stage in front of eighty thousand people a night [supporting the Stones]."

Gigs during a week in England in 1978 were well-received by the British rock press; less so by Thorogood himself. "I was using a bad amp, a bad guitar and it was right at the peak of punk rock," he recalls, "and a lot of people thought we were punk. I even had people spitting on me in Birmingham and Manchester, and I thought they hated me. And when I heard that Bob Dylan came to hear us at Dingwalls, I went: 'Oh, no. Not now – you're seeing me at my absolute worst.'"

There was one compensation. "Eric Burdon stayed in the same hotel one night. He was a gas. He really helped. He knew what it was like when you first break in. He was a good cat, and he was always one of my people. So that was groovy."

Thorogood's discomfort was plain in interviews back then. "Things are pretty bad when they gotta come around to me," he told *Trouser Press*'s Jim Sullivan gloomily in 1981.

But that was just before the real payoff, when his determination to support his first heroes, the Stones, at last succeeded.

"I was going to walk away from the whole thing," he says now. "The one last thing I'd like to do is get a date with the Stones, and get Mick Jagger's autograph. Because I've had enough, of dealing with this industry, and the changing times that just weren't what I thought this thing was about.

"With that attitude we played the gig, and before you know it we were working with these guys for a dozen shows. Nobody ever paid any attention until I got on that stage in front of eighty thousand people a night, and got two or three encores before the Stones, when seventy-nine thousand of them didn't know who I was. I thought: 'I'm on my way out anyway. Who cares? I'm going to go out there and just pretend I'm the baddest cat in the world.' But when Bill Wyman and [the Stones' then-keyboard player] Ian Stewart are coming out to watch you every night, and major record companies are coming after your ass, they were reinforcing what I'd told myself for years: that this is where you belong, that I wasn't a delusional kid from Delaware. I was too old to get a big head. But these money people obviously had this vision that George Thorogood could be a rock star. Who am I to argue?"

Bad To The Bone made that official when MTV helped the track become a hit in 1982.

"It's a tongue-in-cheek fantasy," Thorogood says, "like Bo Diddley [who appears in the video] singing *Who Do You Love?* or the Stones' *Jumpin' Jack Flash* – very groovy, insecure male lyrics!"

But it was a gently downhill slope from there commercially. "You tell yourself that if the ups are high enough, then you can handle the downs," Thorogood says. "Like an athlete in a slump, you know you're in the big leagues, and this will pass."

Party Of One stands out from Thorogood's other records. He's dubbed it a personal statement, and therefore a one-off. It's not the sort of statement the fans in the vicinity of New Jersey's Museum of Ballooning will be hearing later tonight.

"No," says the hard-working, talented pro. "The promoters have hired me to do a rock'n'roll show, and that's what we're gonna do, to the best of our ability, with whatever energy we have at the time."

Is he happy in his work?

"Oh, well, honey baby," he croons, "if I'm not satisfied at this point in my life, I'd better throw it down. You dig me, brother?"

Party Of One is available now via Rounder.

PHOTOFEATURES

"If Radiohead had a baby with Opeth, and that baby listened to a lot of Pink Floyd, it might sound like this"

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TAKING ON THE WORLD. AGAIN

Right from the off, in '89, **Gun** were thrust into the big time: appearing on *Top Of The Pops*, supporting the Stones… Now, with a new album out, they're hoping to get back there.

Words: **Michael Hann**

Gun's singer Dante Gizzi is recalling his childhood experiences that inspired *Boy Who Fooled The World*, the ballad that closes *Favourite Pleasures*, the Glaswegian band's third full-length album since they reunited nearly a decade ago. "Friday nights, I used to plan out this sort of 'religious' evening. Go for my bath, then wait up until my mum came home – she'd be at my aunt's house having a few drinks, and be back late. It gave me the opportunity to sit up listening to the radio, with the headphones on. I've got my finger on the 'Play' and 'Record' buttons, and I'm listening out for songs to record. If I hear the first ten, fifteen seconds and it hooked me, then I'd record it. That's how I got into music, because I had this fascination with songs."

Favourite Pleasures is the sound of Gun playing songs – big, heartfelt, melodic rock songs, with the pop tinge and funk swagger that made the band a rare British hard rock success story in the late 80s.

"We wanted to take it right back and strip it back to the way Gun sounded in the late eighties," Dante says of their new album, during a break from rehearsals. "*Taking On The World* [their 1989 debut album] is quite raw-sounding, and we wanted to strip it back to that."

Dante, along with the rest of Gun, became a rock star by accident with *Taking On The World*, just as he became their singer by accident 20 years later, swapping from bass when the band's stint with former Little Angels frontman Toby Jepson as their singer ended. Dante was 16 years old when Gun's original bassist, Carni Morlotti, left, and guitarist Giuliano 'Jools' Gizzi decided to co-opt his kid brother to step in.

Not that Dante was desperate for the chance. He had a good job, working alongside his relatives in an Italian delicatessen, he had exams coming up, he'd never so much as picked up a bass guitar, and he was, he will admit, a bit terrified of playing live.

It didn't take long for that to change, though. "After three songs of my first show – it was at the Bruce Hotel in East Kilbride – I just felt: 'This is some buzz. This is incredible.' People watching me, getting a reaction. Amazing. I never looked back."

Still, his youth did create the odd problem, such as the time Gun were playing a showcase for record labels and the assorted bigwigs had to be kept waiting for Dante to get there from sitting some school exams.

Gun were an odd proposition when they first came along. At a time when hard rock was dominated by hair metal and thrash, they were neither. They didn't even look like a hard rock band: short hair, no spandex, no leather.

"Our management team wanted a rock band, but it was first things first: 'Get your hair cut, because that look isn't going to last forever,' Dante remembers. "We got it. We understood."

That combination of looking non-tribal and making rock that had a pop sweet spot made Gun favourites of both Radio 1 and *Top Of The Pops*. The reality of the latter proved to be an eye-opener for Dante when Gun made their *TOTP* debut performing *Better Days*, their first single, in the summer of '89

> **"With *Favourite Pleasures* we wanted to strip it back to the way Gun sounded in the late eighties, quite raw."**
>
> **Dante Gizzi**

"There's a part of you that's thinking you've played on the same stage as all the other artists you've watched on a Thursday night, and how incredible that is," he says. "And then you get deflated by seeing how it's actually run. It was like a cattle market. I remember thinking there'd be maybe a couple of thousand people there. You'd be lucky if there were two hundred, all getting carted around: 'Let's go to this stage.' 'Okay, everybody ready for applause!' You almost wish you hadn't seen that side of it."

After charting with *Taking On The World*, two more, bigger hit albums followed – *Gallus* in '92 and *Swagger* in '94 – before everything went off the rails in 1997 after *0141 632 6326*. The band's management allied with singer Mark Rankin and producer Andrew Farris (formerly of INXS) to steer them in a poppier direction that disgusted the Gizzi brothers. "That was such a bad experience for us – Jools and I against the rest of the world, pretty much. We'd have these long discussions: 'Do you really think this sounds like Gun? Cos it certainly doesn't to me.' And if you can't convince yourself, how are you gonna convince anybody else? That was the catalyst for us to disband."

In the years following Gun's demise, Dante wrote for other artists, fronted his own glam-pop band El Presidente – one of the last decade's more notable never-quite-made-it groups – before he and Jools came back together as Gun, motivated largely by not wanting *0141* to be their final statement.

After Jepson left, Jools turned to his brother to put down the bass and front the band. "Part of me thinks: 'I don't want to be constantly compared to Mark,' Dante says. "I had no problem about singing all those songs, because I did sing half of it live from day one. I sung a lot on demos. In the end I thought, 'Fuck it, I'll do it.' But I wanted to incorporate new music as well, because putting your own identity on things is important."

Now he's in his late 40s, Dante appreciates his good fortune rather more than he did first time around. "I wish I could go back in time to remember more of it," he says. "I should have enjoyed it and not been so naive. But I was just a young kid. I never thought about the places we visited, the opportunities we had – like playing with the Stones [on their 1990 European tour]. I just got completely wrecked most of the time."

He barely even recalls Gun receiving an MTV award in 1994 for their hit-single cover of Cameo's *Word Up*. "I could hardly walk, I'd drunk so many spirits. We'd just got off the flight, and I hate flying, so I'd got really gassed on the plane."

These days it's all a bit more sensible, and Dante seems determined to savour every minute, as well as being more realistic about what they might deliver. ●

Favourite Pleasures is released on September 15 via Caroline Records and is reviewed on p90.

Aiming high: Gun are taking a second shot at success with new album *Favourite Pleasures*.

BLOND AMBITION

He's dealt with homelessness and anorexia, survived Hanoi Rocks' hellraising, and found solo success. **Michael Monroe** looks back at a roller-coaster career.

Words: **Ian Fortnam** Portraits: **Kevin Nixon**

Exploding through the door in a jangle of bangles, Michael Monroe is every inch the rock star. Whippet lean, stunningly statuesque, bombshell-blond and carrying off a look mere mortals wouldn't dare attempt – black waistcoat over bejewelled bare torso, black trousers adorned with more superfluous buckles 'n' straps than an S&M bondage convention – he collapses into a sofa, crosses a significant yardage of leg and widens his Kohl-smudged, doe eyes to embark upon a revealing journey into an incident-packed past.

So how has the former Hanoi Rocks frontman endured multiple setbacks to enjoy a solo career that only improves with age? "I'm always a rocker, even at home," he jangles. "Johnny Thunders used to laugh: 'You don't even go to the store without wearing make-up.'"

Mike's the real deal alright. And he's paid way more dues than most, as we shall see.

You took piano lessons from the age of five. Whose decision was that?
My mother's, at first. Then, when I discovered rock'n'roll, I decided to take more piano lessons myself. Up until then I'd only heard classical music, but rock'n'roll got me into playing again. I taught myself guitar, then took lessons in classical flute for about a year, which helped me pick up the sax. Andy [McCoy] gave me a blues harp when I was fifteen and I learned that, just sucking and blowing. That's what I'm still doing, just sucking and blowing. I learnt sax playing along with Little Richard and Coasters records, that raspy, fifties sound.

What events happened in your formative years that most influenced your career choice?
I was born in sixty-two, the same year as the Rolling Stones and two months after Marilyn Monroe died. The first band I saw live was Slade in 1972. I'm so glad my mother let me go. I've got older brothers so I went with them. The acoustics were horrible, they played so loud I couldn't hear for two days, but it was great. My second show was The Sweet, right after the *Sweet Fanny Adams* album. I snuck in for nothing because I was so tiny, and was blown away. I saw Suzi Quatro three times in Finland. At the Finlandia Hall in Helsinki, people stood up to dance and the bouncers tried to make them sit down. Suzi went nuts: 'Let those people be, they're just having a good time.' She was great.

How famous was your dad and what effect did his celebrity have on you when you were growing up?
It didn't affect me that much, but pretty much everybody in Finland knew who he was. When I was a kid there were only three radio channels, one in Swedish, two in Finnish. Radio announcers had to speak properly and have integrity, and my father was one of the last of that generation. He had an exceptionally soft-sounding voice, and for a lot of lonely old people, his voice was the only company they had at night, so he was very much loved. At first I was known as the son of Pentti Fagerholm, the radio announcer, then it turned around so that he was Michael Monroe's dad. He was always very supportive and proud of me. He came to a lot of my shows.

Was pursuing a musical career and changing your name a way of claiming your own personality, to be judged as your own man rather than as a famous father's son?
I never felt the need. Me being a rocker and him being the straight people's favourite was a cool contradiction. I was always proud of him – he never overshadowed me, nor me him. It worked to both our benefits.

The name change was because nobody could pronounce our Finnish names. My birth name was Matti, but since I was eight I was given the nickname Makke. A Venezuelan keyboard player called me Mike. So when we decided to change our names for Hanoi Rocks, I thought Mike was cool but Michael better. And Monroe, I was born the summer she died, always thought she was classy, beautiful and cool, and Michael Monroe sounded good. At first Andy was going to be Andy Monroe.

> **"I wanted to be known for my talent as a musician rather than as just a pretty face."**

Your rock epiphany came watching Black Sabbath on TV when you were eight years old. What was the appeal?
It was so powerful, almost punk. A massive sound like nothing I'd ever heard and the singer was crazy. Going nuts on stage with long hair, wild and free, they sounded like freedom and they were mysterious. They all had their crosses, and I was like, okay, what are these guys about? Then I got their records and started learning English from the lyrics printed on the cover of *Master Of Reality*. Ozzy's singing was raw, he had a cool attitude and totally unique sound. Then I found out the lyrics weren't about the devil at all, but about God, love and light, a great positive message. It's a misconception that heavy metal should be all about devil worship. Satan sucks, let's face it. Satan may sell, but he sucks. I dig Jesus's style.

Pre-Hanoi Rocks, you were supposed to join Andy McCoy's punk band Briard on second guitar, but you refused to cut your hair.
Yes. It was ridiculous. The whole point of rock'n'roll was freedom, being yourself and individuality. The punk thing was great, but "You can join our punk band if you cut your hair"? What, to be in punk fashion? I'm not going to be a slave to fashion. So I said no. And me and Andy started talking about putting a real band together, the way we thought a cool rock band should be, and that's how Hanoi started. After skipping the army, I wasn't going to cut my hair just to be in a band.

Between '76 and '79 you were in a band called, coincidentally, Madness.
There was a guy, a little older than me. He was in the same class as one of my brothers and wanted to be a singer. He had an electric guitar and amp, so I'd hang out and play. We saw punk and thought you don't have to be such a good player, so we wrote some songs and played a party at his house.

The drummer also played with Andy in Briard, and we shared a rehearsal room in the basement of a Helsinki church, where I met Andy. Andy thought I was a guitarist at first. Then I told him I wanted to be a singer and we started hitting it off.

Between school and the musical career taking off, how did you support yourself?
When we started Hanoi Rocks we were homeless. I had a few hundred Finnish marks, not much, when I left home and ended up in Stockholm. So me, Sami Yaffa and Nasty Suicide were living on the streets for the first six months, begging for change. We'd beg enough to get a hamburger to

"In the late seventies in Finland, looking like us was suicide. Hanoi changed a lot of that."

share, or a bottle of wine to forget about the hunger. We befriended other homeless people. We'd sometimes go to a bar and I'd chat up some girl, and when she'd invite me to her house, I'd say: "Do you mind if my friends come along?" Then when we got to the house we'd head straight for the fridge. After six months of rehearsing, Zeppo, who'd expressed an interest in managing us before we left Finland, came to Stockholm to check us out at the rehearsal place. We played our set, he thought it was great, started booking us shows in Finland, and that's how we started making money. Andy McCoy wasn't on the streets. He had a girlfriend [laughs].

The Hanoi Rocks story has been told many times, so let's just touch on a few key moments. Firstly, was relocating to London an absolute necessity?
Yeah. Stockholm was just a stopover. We wanted to make it internationally, and London seemed like the centre of the action back then. In the late seventies in Finland, looking like us was suicide. The general atmosphere was negative, people were very narrow-minded and intolerant of anything different. Hanoi changed a lot of that. We added a little colour and forced the Finnish people to be more open-minded. They hated us until we started getting famous abroad, then 'Look at these freaks, faggots, junkies' became 'Our boys waving the Finnish flag abroad'. I always considered us an international band – we never got anything from Finland but shit at first.

When you arrived in London, what you were doing was counter to the prevailing post-punk landscape, but a scene soon developed around you.
We were just a rock band that wanted to look good. From Little Richard to the Rolling Stones to the Ramones to punk, reggae, blues, we took influences from anything. They tried to call us heavy metal, they tried to call us punk, then they finally came up with the glam thing. I remember someone writing that "the glam revival was started unintentionally by a band that doesn't even do glam". Which is true. We were just a rock band.

Hanoi immediately gained a reputation for overindulgence and mayhem. A report of your trip to Israel and its accompanying photos came to define the band, but you personally always seemed a lot more focused.

How did you deal with the chaos?
I was always like: "What am I going to wake up to next?" "What have the guys done now?" I'm amazed we got out of Israel without being thrown in jail. They were drinking twenty-four hours a day. Not trying to get a reputation – it's just the way they were. Maybe it's part of being Finnish. They'd always get into situations that'd get out of control. I mean, Nasty Suicide…

The clue's in the name, isn't it?
Yeah, really. He had some kind of karma. If a bird shit near him, it wouldn't land on a car or on the street, it'd land on his shoulder or his head or something. He was like a bad luck charm. Always got into trouble, and always at the worst moment. It was almost comical. I wasn't more focused than the other guys, I just wasn't as out of it. I never liked drinking. I had my own demons, and I went through a lot of stuff I kept to myself.

How was life as 'the most beautiful man in rock'? Were you in a relationship, or did your reputation leave you the most unapproachable man in rock?
[Laughs] I was unapproachable on purpose. I liked to be left alone. I've never been with a groupie in my life. I was never interested in casual relationships. I was always too serious. I'd have long periods of contemplation. I'd be almost depressed, quite melancholy. I enjoyed wallowing in my misery sometimes.

But there was a time when I was very lonely. In eighty-three I was mainly wearing black and white and was very lonely for a very long period of time, but in eighty-four I started lighting up again. When me and [late Lords Of The New Church vocalist] Stiv Bators hit it off, I started wearing all the colours under the sun and life started becoming fun again.

I went through a drug thing, but got to a point where I said, "I've got to stop everything or I'm going to lose my mind." I started exercising and swimming. I'd run to the local pool, swim for an hour or two without stopping, run home, eat a little muesli and have a salad for dinner. I was so skinny I could touch my fingers around my waist. I started looking like an old man even though I was only twenty. Looking back on it, I was anorexic. It was my way of saying "screw you" to everyone.

I was skinnier than Andy. Even though Andy doesn't have much muscle tone because he never exercises, except for this [raises a bottle], he gets enough exercise pushing his luck. At least I was muscular, because I was exercising all the time – over-exercising. And without acknowledging it, I was on a liquid diet. I was skin and bone. Then we had three weeks off in August eighty-four and I went to the Finnish countryside where I spent my summers as a kid with my mother's home-cooked food. I started eating normally, little blueberry pies, my favourite foods. I was still exercising so the weight came on evenly. I didn't even notice.

So being off the road put you in a better place mentally.
Yeah. All of a sudden I'm back to normal.

Living in the midst of the most mayhem-filled rock band in the world can't have been the easiest place to be when you're feeling lonely.
Very lonely.

McCoy and Monroe, from the shoot for Hanoi's 1984 picture disc single *Don't You Ever Leave Me*.

And being told you're the most beautiful man in rock didn't help.
It doesn't mean anything. It's flattering, but freaky. Most people think you're a girl [laughs]. I'd walk down the street and hear: "Alright, babe. Nice ass." In *Sounds*' Readers' Poll in 1985 we were in every category. I was number one in Sex Object. I wanted to be known for my talent as a musician rather than as just a pretty face. It didn't hurt to be pretty, but it can put you in a very lonely place, alone in a crowd with people patting you on the back. But they're not real friends and they don't really know you. The irony is you'd think anyone in that position would also be the happiest, richest and most successful, but I had nothing. No friends outside the band, and I was even alienated from them because they resented me for not drinking twenty-four hours. I was quite lonely a lot of the time."

"I wasn't more focused than the other guys in Hanoi Rocks, I just wasn't as out of it."

Razzle's arrival, in 1982, changed the Hanoi Rocks dynamic.
He made Hanoi perfect.

What was the magic that he brought?
His attitude, his spirit, brought us back to life. The band was at a low point around that time. We were getting into some seriously bad shit with Andy hanging out with hard-core junkies. Razzle wasn't great technically, but he had that gung-ho, us-against-the-world attitude and fit in with the band's style perfectly. I loved that he was totally determined to be in the band, and when he joined we were a real gang.

You were all clearly heartbroken by Razzle's death in 1984. You'd lost a close friend and, looking back, it was emblematic of the end of the Hanoi dream.
That's right. And we weren't strong enough to survive such a huge blow, the devastation of losing a best friend. Right in the middle of the craziness and supposedly fun times, this tragedy happened. Sami Yaffa leaving the band was another deciding factor. Everybody was vital to the chemistry of that family unit, so without Sami there was just me, Andy and Nasty left. The new guys had the wrong attitude. They'd have been a disaster and ruined a good memory of a great band. That's why it was crucial to finish Hanoi Rocks [in mid-'85], put it to rest with integrity intact. If we'd persevered and become one of the biggest bands in the world, it would have been even worse. No matter how much money we'd have had, no matter how much fame, it would have been cursed.

It was a hard time, I had no idea what I was going to do. Stiv Bators was my only friend. Andy and Nasty were really down there [drinking], and I was up there [sober]. So there was no connection. Nasty was cool, though. When they decided to put the Cherry Bombz together, he came round and asked if we could go out to lunch so he could tell me he was planning to join Andy's band. I really appreciated the gesture and gave him my blessing.

On your return to London following Razzle's death, you guested on stage with the London Cowboys at the Fulham Greyhound on New Year's Eve '84. A fateful night?
Yeah, a really important night. Stiv's wife Stacy disappeared with Andy McCoy, and me and Stiv connected. I remember Stiv saying: "Do you think those guys are in love, or is it just the smack?" We ended up back at Stiv's place, singing harmonies. I looked after Stiv's cat, Ziggy, when he was on tour, and eventually moved in. After that we became really close. I was a big fan before we met and we made a strong connection spiritually. He encouraged me to start my solo career and to start writing songs. That's when I decided, "Okay, I'll be Michael Monroe and continue solo."

Why did you relocate from London to New York City to put your first solo band together?
Little Steven came over to produce the Lords Of The New Church *Lord's Prayer* single. Stiv knew what a big fan I was, so he brought him over. Stiv showed him the Hanoi Rocks *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams* video, and Steven was like: 'What the fuck is this? This is the greatest band I've ever seen, man. What are you guys doing now?' So I told him the whole story, and he decided he wanted to help me with my solo career.

While we were recording demos, Steven was also working on the Sun City project, so he invited me and Stiv to sing on it. Appearing on *Sun City*, collaborating with Miles Davis, Pete Townshend, Bono, Keith Richards, Ronnie Wood, Bob Dylan, all these great people, was the first thing I did in my solo career. I felt so proud to be part of it. Stiv and I sang our parts in London, then Steven flew us over to do the video in New York. We slept on Stiv's friend's floor for a week, and I decided to move to New York and start over. The memories in London had become sad since Razzle died, so I figured it was time for a new start. So I moved, started meeting musicians, and eventually made the *Nights Are So Long* album. It was only released in Scandinavia and Japan at first, so I used it as an international demo, got signed to Polygram and made my first worldwide album, *Not Fakin' It*.

From *Nights Are So Long* onwards, all evidence suggested you were about to break big, but sales remained modest. It must have been a frustrating time?
When promoting *Not Fakin' It*, the label made a TV commercial that said 'Michael Monroe, He's Not Fakin' It, The brains behind Hanoi Rocks'. Most people wouldn't have noticed, and I probably would have been fine leaving it alone, but I couldn't live with it. I called the label and said: "You can't say: 'The brains behind Hanoi Rocks' – it wasn't planned, it was spontaneous.' So they said: "You don't like the ad? You want to pull it?' And I said yes. I thought they were going to make a new one, but they pulled the plug on the whole record.

Then Steve Stevens called and said he should be my guitar player, so I figured maybe this could be something. We worked on songs for a year and became friends. I wanted Little Steven to produce the album [released under the name Jerusalem Slim], but the label chose Michael Wagener, a heavy metal producer from Germany. That combination was the worst. The record turned into a nightmare, the worst thing that ever happened to my career. It ended up costing me seven hundred thousand dollars to make a record everybody hated.

After recording the vocals in LA there was supposed to be a couple of weeks of guitar overdubs, which ended up being three months of guitar hell. Steve started doubling and quadrupling parts and solos, with Wagener encouraging him to do all this noodling, flashy stuff. I tried to stop it at three hundred thousand dollars. I got my A&R guy to come from New York to California, and I said: 'Look, man, I'm begging you. Stop this.' Wagener played him some songs, and he was like: "Hey, this song's great. It's cool, dude." And I said: "It's not my record any more. It's my deal and it's gone right to fucking hell. What do you want? To spend three hundred thousand more dollars and then realise it's a piece of crap that nobody will love?"

Finally, Steve started redoing Sami Yaffa's bass parts, took the soul out of the whole record. Then when it came to mixing, Steve had a falling out with Wagener. He came to me and said: "He's mixing it all wrong." I said: "What!? Now you're telling

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me this? Jesus. It's wrong from the beginning." So he said: "The only thing we can do with this record is scrap everything and start over." Then he went to New York and disappeared. The next time I saw him he's on the MTV Awards playing guitar for Vince Neil, of all people [following the road accident that led to Razzle's death on December 8, 1984, Mötley Crüe's Neil was charged with vehicular manslaughter and driving under the influence of alcohol]. Though, I've got to say, I never blamed him. How can you blame someone for a horrible accident?

After that it took me over a year to get off the label. I had a major deal, was contracted for six or seven albums, but I'd never see a cent because I already owed a million, so the only thing to do was get off the label. Then one day, thank God, I was dropped. My next move was to make the Demolition 23 album with Little Steven. We did it in two weeks – recorded the basic tracks in three days, the vocals in two days, then we mixed it – and it was one of the best records I've ever done."

Demolition 23 was almost a second incarnation of Hanoi Rocks, then Nasty Suicide retired from the music business. Another blow?

[Laughs] Yeah, just my luck. Two steps up and five steps back. First of all Jay Hening, the guitarist on the album – great player, nice guy – got hit by a car and broke his leg. When he was finally better, we were just about to go on tour and he got arrested for scoring drugs. My lawyer bailed him and he avoided jail, but couldn't leave the country, so we brought in Nasty. Then during the next tour Nasty said that he was going to stop playing altogether.

What prompted your return home, from New York back to Finland?

Though I was born in Helsinki, I spent all my summers in the countryside as a child and learned to appreciate the natural environment. My brother, who'd built himself a house there, fixed up an old house, and me and my wife Jude and our cat Susi moved in. From one extreme to the other, Manhattan to the middle of nowhere.

The first year was great. I had no TV, was feeling good, really creative, chopping wood, shovelling snow. Then in the second year it turned out there was a mould problem and we had to get out. I found another house even further into the woods. Then that house developed a mould problem, so we moved to Turku in February 2000.

In 2001 my late wife passed away, completely unexpected, totally devastating. I ran into Andy McCoy and he seemed pretty together. He'd fallen off a three-storey balcony and the doctors said he should be dead and would never walk again, but he's walking now.

I was trying to keep as busy as possible. After losing Jude I never thought I'd find anybody again. But in 2002 I met my current wife, Johanna, who's a hairdresser and was doing my hair. We moved in together and I found happiness again. Eventually. But at first I just wanted to work as much as possible. So me and Andy started doing some stuff. I thought it'd be interesting to see what we could accomplish after all these years. I never thought we were going to use the name Hanoi Rocks – the thought of a rebirth never occurred to me. I'd never do a one-off reunion tour just to make money. We had to create something new, be an actual band again.

Mid-80s Hanoi Rocks: (l-r) Razzle, Sami Yaffa, Michael Monroe (front), Andy McCoy, Nasty Suicide.

Splits personality: Monroe shows off his stage moves.

It's fair to say Hanoi Rocks' re-formation was a success. Three albums in four years represents a pretty good second bite of the cherry.

Yeah. Good records were made and we maintained the band's integrity in a way that didn't ruin it. It was a big step for me to call it Hanoi Rocks. I called Dregen and asked: "Is this blasphemy, or what?" He said: "No, man, it's great. It's not a reunion, it's a rebirth, and there's a big difference." We had fun, and being Hanoi, we could experiment with all kinds of musical styles, but it ran its course. The *Street Poetry* album was good, featured the best line-up, but it wasn't fun any more for other reasons. So I called Andy and said, "Let's call it a day, do some farewell shows and put the band to its final rest."

> **"People say you have to suffer for good art, but I don't have to suffer any more. I've enough character, and I'm happy."**

On the final Hanoi Rocks tour, in 2008, we spoke about the split. You said you wanted to drop the glam, toughen up musically. But it was pretty obvious from Andy's demeanour that working with him must have presented problems.

Yes, it was a challenge at times. At first he had a new spark, but it started sliding back to the old thing, the resentment I never understood. We'd be in the studio and I'd have to catch him early in the afternoon before he had one beer too many. So it was no fun.

Relaunching your solo career in 2009, you reconnected again with Hanoi's Sami Yaffa.

Yeah, he came to Finland with the New York Dolls, invited me up to jam and we hung out until four in the morning. Sami said he wanted to work with me again, so I thought, "Wow, that's almost half a band right there." Then Ginger and Steve Conte got on board, we made a live album and started working on new songs.

2011's *Sensory Overdrive* showed that you and Ginger wrote brilliantly together.

He's a really great songwriter. We wrote some great stuff and it was so much fun doing the demos.

You must have known that working with Ginger could only be temporary – he's too much of a tireless creative mind to ever be bound by a single project – and replacing him with Dregen moved the musical dialogue forward again.

Dregen was the only guy I could imagine replacing Ginger. At first Ginger just wanted to be the

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On tour for Monroe's *Horns And Halos* solo album in 2013.

guitar player in a band, didn't want the pressure of being the frontman, and it was great for a whole year. I remember Lemmy saying: "How's it going with him?" like it was going to be a problem. I said: "He calms me down. I love the guy, I'm having a great time. What are all these problems people keep talking about?" Then he just wanted to move on, and the only guy I could think of was Dregen. I'd actually asked him to join before Steve Conte but he was busy with a solo project. He was the only guy I wanted. You can't have a session guy in this band, you need a personality, and he's such a character. What Slash is in America, Dregen is in Sweden."

You're a hell of frontman. In Hanoi's early days you were bending your body into all kinds of impossible shapes. Do you still train hard, or are you just a naturally bendy dude?
[Laughs] I can do the splits, so I guess I'm what you'd call double-jointed. Which doesn't mean I smoke two joints a day.

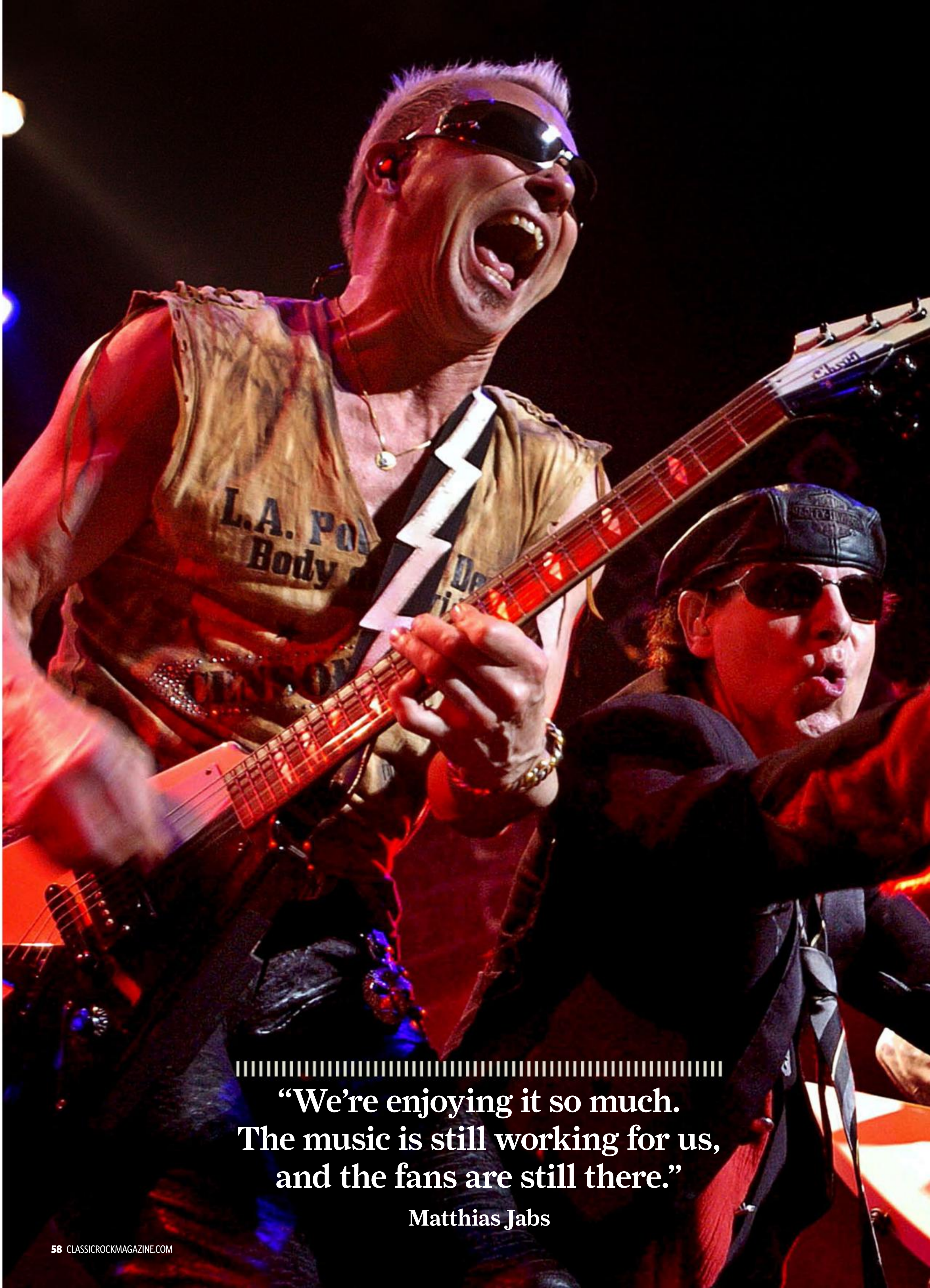
Can you still fold yourself in half backwards?
I used to. I'd be playing harp, bend over backwards, land on my head and then lift myself back up without my hands. I'm sure that's why my lower back started causing me problems in 2008. The bones in my lower back had worn out. I was in such pain after every show, I started thinking maybe it's over. Then I went to three different physiotherapists who all told me different things, so I applied whatever I thought worked for me. The inner stomach muscles support your back, so I exercised those for three months, started feeling better and eventually got rid of the pain. I figure maybe I've got another twenty years left, so I've been concentrating on exercising lately.

The day will come when you'll just snap like a twig.
I'm working on avoiding that, and being able to do what I do and not be in too much pain. I don't like taking painkillers – exercising's the key and the best exercise is performing. You've got the show and the audience as your motivation.

Now that guitarist Rich Jones is in the band, the material is moving in another subtly different direction.
Yeah. People tell me the last three albums are the best I've done, and that's what I strive for. Rich Jones, Steve Conte, Karl Rockfist, Sam Yaffa feel like the greatest band I've had in my solo career. The spirit's there, the chemistry, and as far as writing songs goes, Rich and Steve know me so well they get inside my head.

Is the success all the sweeter for having arrived relatively late in your career and also at no little cost?
Yeah, I can appreciate it and I've certainly paid my dues. People say you have to suffer for good art, but I don't have to suffer any more. I've enough character, and I'm happy. In fact, I'd say I'm happier now than I've ever been. I have the best band I could hope for, I'm happy at home with my wife and three cats. What more can you want from life?

MM's The Best is out now via Spinefarm.



"We're enjoying it so much. The music is still working for us, and the fans are still there."

Matthias Jabs

Don't Mention THE END

As farewells go, the one the Scorpions continue to take since they announced their retirement is a long one. But why park the car when the ride is still thrilling and the bodies still willing?

Words: **Paul Lester**

In 2007, Scorpions frontman Klaus Meine told *Classic Rock*: "We want to end on a high, to keep going and find a moment to have a nice way out of this madness."

The band's 2012 documentary film *Forever And A Day* charted their ascent from the back streets of Hanover to the main stages of Europe, America and beyond, and was planned to culminate with their retirement. Five years later they're still going strong, and about to embark on a tour of the US with Megadeth. What went right?

"We always say as long as the Rolling Stones can do it, we can do it," guitarist Matthias Jabs says, laughing.

Jabs still has something of the 'new boy' about him, even though he joined the band before the recording of 1979's *Lovedrive* album.

"They don't seem to stop! I'm going to see them in Hamburg in September so let's see what shape they're in. But as long as they keep doing it, we have to keep our promise alive."

Jabs turns 62 this October, bandleader Rudolf Schenker has just had his 68th birthday and Meine is 70 next May. Schenker doesn't bother celebrating, his rationale being that "in this rock'n'roll world, where I'm still alive, every day is a happy birthday".

"We've got Mikkey Dee now," he says, the former Motörhead drummer having replaced James Kottak, who allowed his penchant for alcohol to get the better of him. "He fits perfectly in the band. We fly together, we sit together after concerts, we have dinner together. We're enjoying it so much. The music is still working for us, and the fans are still there. That's the best birthday I can think of."

"It's more relaxed than it ever was," Jabs says in agreement. "Paweł [Mciwoda, bass] and Mikkey get on so well, which is very important. There is a fantastic atmosphere between the five of us, and musically we're on top form."

Ageing might seem a gloomy topic, but the Scorpions manage to invest it with the energy and good humour they bring to their music.

"I just turned sixty-nine, Meine says. "On my next birthday there will be a number seven, and unfortunately around that age so many great artists left us. It's really sad to see that generation come to an end."

With so many recent rock deaths, including Lemmy, Bowie and Prince, have they started to worry about their own mortality?

"Of course – when you're over sixty, the chances [of dying] are greater than when you're forty," Schenker reasons, "but I don't think about it at all."

He is, however, concerned about the consequent future of rock. "It's sad to see so many great musicians die in recent years, and it will happen even more because people only live so long. One day it will hit the Stones, and the next day the Scorpions. And when we're all gone there'll be nothing authentic left regarding rock music. When all the great artists and great bands are dead, automatically this [rock'n'roll] is all over. Then you'll have either copycats or just the new stuff."

Schenker might not lose much sleep about death, but you can't help wondering if he worries about how long his rift with his younger brother Michael will continue. It was in 2016 that stories started to appear about Michael's "mistrust" of the Scorpions, for whom he played lead guitar in the early days, accusing them of "fooling people" by carrying on touring after their farewell concerts and accusing his elder brother of not giving him the credit he's due for his contribution to Scorpions' 70s albums.

Are Meine and Jabs aware of the brotherly spat?

"No, not at all," the singer fibs.

Ditto Jabs. "Um, actually, I don't really know what was going on there," he says. "I read a few things and thought it was as stupid as it could ▷

REX

The Scorpions build their famous onstage pyramid in 1988: (l to r) Francis Buchholz, Matthias Jabs, Rudolf Schenker, Klaus Meine, Herman Rarebell.

New Scorpions drummer Mikkey Dee, formerly of Motörhead, with the band in Texas in 2016.

get, then I forgot about it. I don't know if anything has changed. Nobody talks abut it here."

"I saw some of [the arguing] on the internet," Meine adds. "I don't know what Michael is up to."

He pauses, then draws parallels with notorious rock sibling rivalries past. "I remember when we saw The Kinks in the sixties, the Davies brothers were fighting all the time," he says with a chuckle. "That's just the way it is sometimes with brothers. But what's going on between Rudolf and Michael I can't say, because I don't understand it. But it doesn't have any effect on Scorpions at all."

> **"We had our crazy road years when we threw TVs out of the window, but we didn't call the press."**
> **Klaus Meine**

Has Meine ever had a fight with one of the other band members?

"We have our little fights about set-lists or production, and sometimes, yeah, it can be a little rough. But that's the way it is with Scorpions: they put out this stinger and this little fight, then it's respect and a big hug."

Besides, don't most bands worth their salt thrive on creative tension and the odd spot of argy-bargy.

"You're right, it's not sunshine every day," says Jabs. He doesn't make it explicit, but he seems to consider Michael Schenker's decision to air his dirty laundry in public inappropriate. "Everybody should be aware of that," he says pointedly, "but unfortunately it's not always the case."

It's down to Rudolf to set the matter straight.

"I think because my brother is so good a guitar player, he never took care about business," he muses of Michael's somewhat less consistent trajectory from Scorpions to UFO to the Michael Schenker Group and beyond. "He is such a fantastic guitar player, but he changed horses so often and had a little less light in the Scorpions, who always went through everything together, like with Klaus and me.

"His mistake was that he didn't talk to me first before doing interviews," he says of Michael's attacks on him in the press. "I would never say a bad word about him, and whatever he says is fine with me.

"I think he has the idea that I have a much better life than him. Of course that's depressing for him. But that's how it is. What can I say? I love my brother, he's an amazing guitar player. But it's like my father said: 'Where there is much light, there are big shadows.'

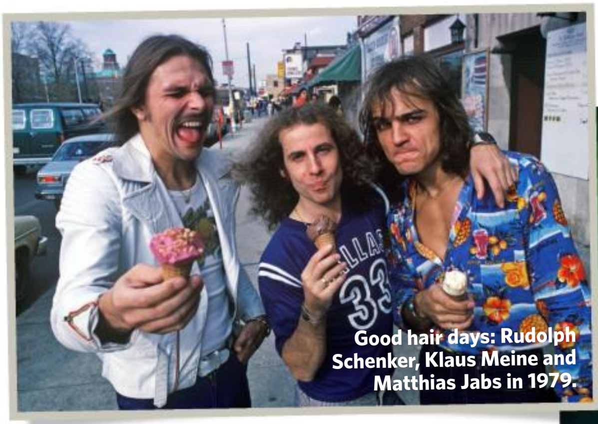
"He wanted it his way," Schenker says, the final word on the subject. "He wanted to be one of the biggest guitar players in the world, and I wanted to be part of one of the biggest rock groups. So everybody got what they asked for."

Scorpions haven't just had to negotiate personal difficulties. As one of the world's biggest rock bands, they're also right at the coal face during global upheaval and change. They were there during the *Wind Of Change* era as the Berlin Wall came down, playing Russia and befriending former Soviet Union leader Mikael Gorbachev (who, impressively, was a talking head in the *Forever And A Day* rock doc). Now they're touring and performing during a particularly turbulent time for the planet, which must prove challenging.

"I would say so," Jabs says, speaking a couple of weeks before the nuclear standoff between the US and North Korea. "We've always had wars, but with terrorism on top of everything it seems the world is crazier and darker than ever."

He brings a much-needed sense of perspective to proceedings: "If you turned off your television and computer and didn't buy a daily paper, you wouldn't think about it. The media helps to promote the wars and terrorism. If everybody shut up and stopped writing about it every time, it wouldn't be so bad."

MAIN: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM; INSET: GETTY


Good hair days: Rudolph Schenker, Klaus Meine and Matthias Jabs in 1979.

Band of brothers: Michael (right) and Rudolph Schenker with the Scorpions at Hammersmith Odeon, London, in 2008.

Nevertheless, the Scorpions have had very real brushes with danger. They were in Turkey just before the attempted coup d'état in 2016. "We just got out of there in time," Jabs says with an audible shudder. "It was close." They were also the first band to play in Beirut after 15 years of civil war, a decidedly unsettling experience. "There were bullet holes and ruins everywhere, and in my hotel room there was this sticker on my window showing a guy with a gun and a red line across it. It said: 'Beware of snipers, close the curtains first, then turn on the light.'" He laughs nervously. "It's one way to welcome you, I guess."

On the night of this interview, the Scorpions play a secret gig in Munich, to make up for a cancelled show last year following what was initially thought to be a terrorist attack but turned out to be a lone gunman shooting at a McDonald's.

"We promised we'd do the show whenever we were in Munich again," Meine explains. "We played Paris ten days after the terrible attacks at the Bataclan, at the Bercy Arena," he recalls, seeming not unduly preoccupied by threats of terror. "It was amazing. It was completely packed, and it was very moving when the whole arena sang the Marseillaise [French national anthem]. It was a statement: 'We're here and we stand strong together through this.'

"As a musician you go for it," he continues, unbowed. "They [terror attacks] are at the back of everyone's mind these days, whether in a soccer stadium or at a concert like the [Ariana Grande] one in Manchester. It's horrifying. Every night we play *Wind Of Change*, I introduce it by saying: 'Take a look at the world today. We need another wind of change.' The crowd goes nuts. Years after writing that song it's like, wow, look what's happening: Brexit, Trump, Europe… It feels like everything's falling apart. But I would never give up hoping that things will turn out for the better."

Arguably more than any other German band apart from Kraftwerk, the Scorpions became unofficial ambassadors for their country, helping to improve its reputation in the eyes of the world.

"Absolutely right," Meine affirms. "We always went out there feeling like our parents' generation was at war with the rest of the world. So yes, in a way we feel like we go out and make a statement for a more peaceful world."

"We wanted to show the Russian people that Germany was not coming with tanks and war but with music and love," Schenker says of the Scorpions' historic 1988 shows in the former USSR.

Talking of love… Presumably the Scorpions' days of amorous (and, for that matter, narcotic) misadventures on the road are long gone?

"That is history, and has been for decades," Jabs says. "That all ended with the eighties. We've seen and done it all, but we're good now. We like to keep healthy, although we don't need to go to the gym – being on stage is exercise enough."

Meine agrees that their days of bacchanalian excess are in the past, although even then they tended not to publicise their misdemeanours.

"We had our crazy road years when we threw TVs out of the window, but we didn't call the press," he says. "There was a lot of booze and having fun. Of course, for whoever was touring in the eighties, drugs were around everywhere, and Scorpions were no exception. It was a question of: do you want to go down this road and be part of this drugs thing, or do you stay away from it? I can only say for myself, but when I lost my voice in the early eighties around the time of the *Blackout* album, and then got cured and could sing again, for me to fuck it all up again with drugs was no option at all."

Clearly, the days of the band doing their famous pyramid are also no more. "No way," Meine says, laughing, appalled at the thought of having to recreate their trademark on-stage configuration one more time for posterity.

As for Schenker ("Mister Fitness", as the singer calls him), he has yoga and meditation these days to keep him on the straight and narrow.

"When we were doing *Lovedrive*, *Blackout* and *Love At First Sting*, it was like surfing on a big wave," he says of Scorpions' early-80s heyday and their propensity at the time for carnal indulgence. He cites the lyrics to their hugely popular 1984 anthem *Rock You Like A Hurricane*, all too aware of the sexist, demeaning period vernacular. "That was part of our thinking, of how we saw rock'n'roll: *'What is wrong with another sin?/The bitch is hungry, she needs to tell/So give her inches and feed her well.'* It was before Aids, the perfect rock'n'roll world.

"There are still drugs and groupies [available]," he says (like Meine and Jabs he's a happily married man), "but we don't need it any more, because we know it destroys your energy and creativity."

"What's going on between Rudolf and Michael I can't say, because I don't understand it."

Klause Meine

The Scorpions are clever enough to know by now how to adapt and survive. That's why they're still here, albeit quite different from the experimental creatures whose 1972 debut album *Lonesome Crow* was produced by Krautrock alchemist Conny Plank. It's quite some distance from early-years guitarist Uli Roth, *Speedy's Coming* and *The Sails Of Charon* to the party starters of *Lovedrive* and *Blackout*, and the epic balladeers of *Wind Of Change*. But the point with the Scorpions is to embrace the changes.

"We've had periods where everybody is telling us: 'Oh, what you're doing is shit,'" Jabs says with a laugh, "or when the record company doesn't want to know and radio doesn't play you. Then you try something different, and ten years later they tell you the eighties were the greatest. We are more like an eighties band than we are a seventies band; the Uli period is too different. Since I joined, the band found their style, the one that made them internationally successful, because it was more commercial. The nineties were difficult, and then we found ourselves again in the two-thousands. And now we are back to what we developed in the eighties."

There are advocates of early-70s Scorpions, while others prefer their 80s incarnation. Most, though, would agree that they lost their way a bit during the grunge era, then found themselves again in the new century. But how about the Scorpions themselves? Do they have a favourite phase?

"The best one is the eighties, no question about it," Schenker says. "The time and the music were right. Now the time is great again. Why? Because after we turned round three hundred and sixty degrees, we've come back out, and we're still here. So I'd say the eighties and now."

Meine is similarly ambivalent: "A lot of people would think it would be the eighties, but life is still so good. I'm very happy in the here and now."

The Scorpions are currently on tour. See www.the-scorpions.com/tour for full dates.

GETTY x2

Combining the talents of RATM, Cypress Hill and Public Enemy, rock-rap supergroup **Prophets Of Rage** tell us why it'll take a nation of millions to hold them back.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Words: **Luke Morton** Photos: **John McMurtrie**

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"Prophets Of Rage was brought to life because of the emergency of the political times. Prophets continue to be a band because we love playing together. It's that simple."

These are the words of former Rage Against The Machine and Audioslave guitarist Tom Morello, sitting at a table backstage at the cavernous Rockhal venue in southern Luxembourg, ahead of a headline performance tonight. The band are in the middle of a mammoth European festival run, but they're also fitting in their own gigs where possible, including London's Brixton Academy the week before. Not bad for a band that didn't exist just over a year ago.

Morello formed Prophets Of Rage in May 2016 after reading a news article that stated Donald Trump 'rages against the machine,' which, as you'd expect, did not sit well with the revolution-ready riff lord. "Oh hell no, that's not what we had in mind," he says.

Originally tweeting about the article with a "snarky comment", he knew there was more he could do than sit and bask in the retweet

Prophets Of Rage: (l-r) Brad Wilk, Tom Morello, B-Real, Chuck D, Tim Commerford, DJ Lord.

glow. "We've got this insane arsenal of material that's better suited to 2017 than it is to 1993, so how do we make that feel like something totally contemporary, is engaged in both the politics of the day and the rock'n'roll of the day?"

The answer was just a phone call away. Sending out the bat signal, long-time musical partners Tim Commerford and Brad Wilk instantly came aboard to join the cause. Soon after they were joined by Cypress Hill's B-Real, and Public Enemy's own DJ Lord and Chuck D. Having the godfather of hip-hop fronting one of the best rhythm sections in rock music is surely going to get your message out.

Sitting in his dressing room, poring over notebooks, Chuck D is a much more sedate and softly-spoken figure than the beast we'll be seeing on stage in a few hours. Right now he's making sure he rests his knees, ankles and Achilles. While he admits to originally having apprehensions about joining Prophets Of Rage due to his day job and real-life commitments, soon it became clear that there was no better place than here and no better time than now. "I've been making songs for thirty years, but I was really excited about taking on the challenge of doing Rage songs," he admits in his cool-

"We're members of the resistance – sonic and cultural and political."

Tom Morello

The Prophets: fighting the power, at festivals across the world.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"We're not sitting on the sidelines of history. If we're going down, then we're going down swingin'." Tom Morello

as-ice drawling baritone. But this isn't just about playing Rage, Public Enemy or Cypress Hill covers like we see tonight – there's a long-term plan, and a full-length record is released this month.

"I've made fifteen or so records and this is the most collaborative record I've ever been a part of," Morello says with an air of pride. "Everyone has the openness to share ideas, and the humility to be open to everyone else's ideas."

Throughout Morello's musical career, one thing has remained a constant – the partnership with Wilk and Commerford. From Rage Against The Machine to Audioslave, the trio have written some of the biggest rock anthems of all time – something that isn't lost on their new mouthpiece.

"Tim, Brad and Tom create a magic that people can't explain," says Chuck. "You can't explain why John Paul Jones, John Bonham and Jimmy Page sound the way they did, and it's the same with Tom, Brad and Tim. They sound the way they do together and there's no explanation as to why."

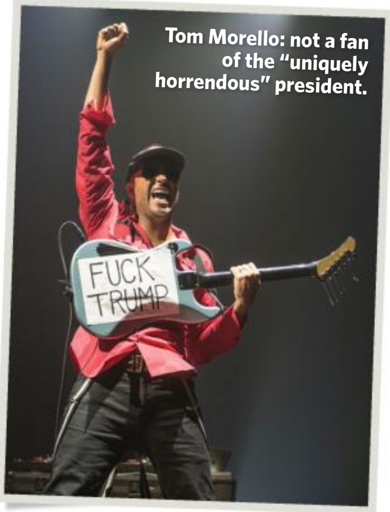
So how does this new incarnation of rock'n'roll's triple threat compare to Audioslave?

"It's being in a band with some of our biggest influences," Morello says with a grin. "When Rage Against The Machine was forming, the two cassettes we listened to the most were the first Cypress Hill record and Soundgarden's *Badmotorfinger*, and later on, miraculously, I work with both. What this has in common is playing with your heroes, then creating an environment where you're able to be peers, and create something together that you aim to stand shoulder to shoulder with your best work."

Time will tell if Prophets Of Rage's debut album deserves to sit alongside *Evil Empire* or *Out Of Exile*, but the play-off of B-Real and Chuck D intertwined with RATM's rhythm section is joyous to behold. And with the band tackling such topics as the Los Angeles homeless crisis in *Living On The 110*, drone warfare in *Take Me Higher* and the freedom of human beings in *Legalize Me*, it's not just sloganeering masquerading as protest.

But is this all just a cynical ploy to cash in on the backlash against President Trump? Sure, the band formed before the election, but would we be seeing Prophets Of Rage bulldoze through Download, Hellfest and beyond if Hillary Clinton had won?

"Trump is uniquely horrendous and clownish," Morello says, "but until everybody's got enough to eat and everybody's got a place to live, and there's no more war, there's going to be a reason to play these songs. When we solve all of those things, we'll play love songs," he says with a glimmer of humour in his voice, yet backed with a sense of fury.



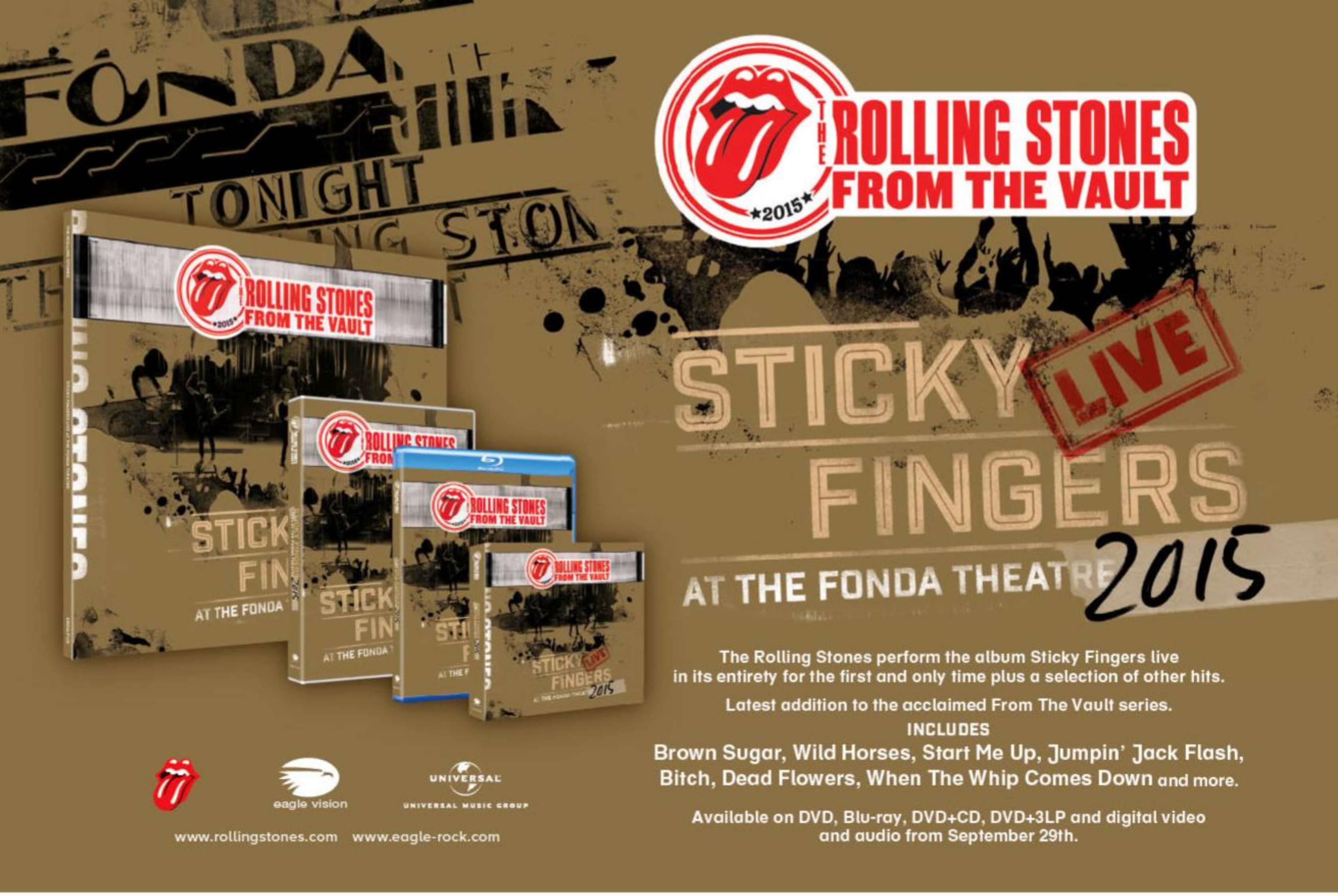
Tom Morello: not a fan of the "uniquely horrendous" president.

"You don't wish for catastrophes so you can be the 'relevant, speaking to the armageddon' band – you wish for a better world," he asserts. "We'd have found twelve topics to write a record about. We didn't ask for the train wreck in order to give us coverage. The train wreck happened, but we were on our way to fixing the world because the world won't fix itself."

And that's the point Prophets Of Rage are making, both on stage and off, and like their new-age anthem states, it's time to unfuck the world. Are Prophets Of Rage the band to do that?

"We're certainly members of the resistance – sonic and cultural and political," says Morello. "The record we made and these shows are a mission statement. We're not sitting on the sidelines of history. If we're going down then we're going down swingin'." ●

Prophets Of Rage's self-titled album is released on September 15 via Caroline Records.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WHIPPING BOYS

Right from when **Stone Temple Pilots** released their debut album, they were pilloried like no other band before or since. Even though they became one of the great groups of the 90s, the wounds from those attacks never fully healed.

Words: **Dave Everley**

In an episode of one of the most popular TV shows of the early 90s, there's an exchange that sums up the prevailing critical view of Stone Temple Pilots when they first came along. In it, those two unlikely arbiters of cool, Beavis and Butt-head stare blank-eyed out of the screen as the video to STP's hit single *Plush* plays. "Is this Pearl Jam?" cackles Beavis.

"Yeah, Eddie Vedder dyed his hair red," snorts Butt-head.

Beavis: "Wait a minute. This isn't Pearl Jam."

Butt-head: "They both suck."

Beavis: "Pearl Jam doesn't suck. They're from Seattle."

In that brief conversation, those animated sofa-dwellers with the single-digit IQs neatly summed up the reception the Los Angeles band had received from sections of the mainstream music press: they were copyists, opportunists, bandwagon jumpers. They had the temerity to sign to a major label without putting in the hours on some godforsaken indie label than no one but the hippest hipster knew about. Jesus, they weren't even from the right city.

The vitriol heaped upon Stone Temple Pilots was vastly out of proportion to their supposed crimes against cool. The band's debut album, *Core*, was simultaneously confident and pained, anthemic and intimate. Sure, it slotted neatly into prevailing trends, and yes, singer Scott Weiland's chameleonic baritone evoked both Eddie Vedder and Kurt Cobain. But Stone Temple Pilots were their own men – and men of the people at that, as the eight million people who bought *Core* can testify.

If there's a band that Stone Temple Pilots should be compared to, it's Led Zeppelin. Not musically – the surviving members of STP aren't foolish enough to draw a parallel there. But certainly both bands were forced to endure an inordinate amount of shit being undeservedly dumped on them early in their careers, and both eventually rose above it with dignity and pride intact.

"We grew up listening to bands like Led Zeppelin, who got heavy criticism," says bassist Robert DeLeo, a man with the slicked-back hair, deep-set eyes and warm vocal tones of a 1920s stage hypnotist. "When you model yourself on someone you admire, and you see they got the slings and arrows too, it gives you a kind of strength. The whole mentality of STP at all times was: 'Let's write the best songs.' That's what it was all about. It was honouring the craft of the song."

This year *Core* turns 25, and the craft DeLeo talks about hasn't just stood the test of time, it has aged better than many of its contemporaries. While the journey since taken by the band that made it has been marked by breathless highs and heartbreaking lows, the album that started it off stands as a validation of everything Stone Temple Pilots set out to achieve.

Robert DeLeo moved to Los Angeles in 1984 with $1,200 in his pocket and ambition in his head. He and his elder brother Dean had grown up on the other side of America in small-town New Jersey, where they spent their early years listening and playing along to Led Zeppelin, T.Rex and Cheap Trick.

It was in LA that Robert met a skinny suburban kid named Scott Weiland. Cleveland-born but raised in Orange Country, Weiland was an all-American quarterback type with a wild streak a mile wide. As a teen he'd dabbled with marijuana and cocaine and been sent to rehab by his mum and stepdad for his troubles.

"He was a completely different person back then," says Robert. "He was fresh out of college, kind of on a fratboy, jock kind of trip. He was very energetic, very alpha male. But he definitely had the gift of singing."

Weiland and his best friend, guitarist Corey Hickok, had a band called Soi Distant, whose pretentious, would-be European-sounding name was matched by their pretentious, would-be European-sounding music. A chance encounter with Robert DeLeo prompted them to ditch the Duran Duran and Ultravox influences and form a new band, Swing. Soon the trio were joined by drummer Eric Kretz.

"We were into the more funky, James Brown-meets-rock type of thing," Kretz recalls. "The stuff Robert and I were really trying to do was in that Zeppelin, James Brown, Grand Funk Railroad vein, with funky backbeats underneath the rock music. The songs were a lot more silly."

But every chain has a weak link, and Swing's was Corey Hickok. In 1989, Robert suggested the band bring in his brother Dean as a replacement. Dean was approaching 30 and living in San Diego, where he ran a construction firm. But he'd never given up the guitar, or the dream of becoming a musician.

"I was asked to play some solos early on, and it was pretty evident that they needed to make a change," says Dean. "I was just getting on with my life, and they said: 'Hey, man, why don't you join the band?' Corey was Scott's best friend, and I think it was hard for him. But he knew that the band had to grow and expand."

Dean insisted the band change their name to mark a fresh start, and Swing became Mighty Joe Young, after the black-and-white 1949 *King Kong* knock-off. It wasn't the only thing that was different. "When Dean joined the band, the dynamics changed and the songwriting changed," says Kretz. "We got a much more hard rock type of sound. As far as the lyrics Scott was coming up with, a lot of the joking and silliness went. And his vocal approach got a lot heavier. He started channelling Jim Morrison and David Bowie."

Life in a struggling band in LA was tough. Robert DeLeo earned a paltry wage working in a guitar shop amid the hookers, drug dealers and dreaming musicians on Sunset Strip. "Working at the guitar shop and seeing some of these hair-band guys come in was an education," says Robert.

> **"WHEN YOU MODEL YOURSELF ON SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE, AND YOU SEE THEY GOT THE SLINGS AND ARROWS TOO, IT GIVES YOU A KIND OF STRENGTH."**
> **ROBERT DeLEO**

"Every one of those could play really great, but it was a blueprint of how not to treat people."

His job put Robert on the front line of the LA music scene, watching the changing of the guard as it happened. The glam-metal groups still ruled the streets, but there was a new breed of bands waiting in the wings, including Jane's Addiction and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. "It felt like something was happening," he says now. "And it felt like we could be part of it."

While Robert was selling axes to soon-to-be-has-beens, Weiland was working across the

NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

street at a model agency, chauffeuring beautiful women to assignments around town.

"It was great because I would have an idea and run over there real quick, or he'd have an idea and run over to me," says Robert. "Scott was very focused; he was like a lion. He was very ambitious, very passionate about all aspects of being in a band. Lyrics and music and success – he wanted it just as much, if not more, as the three of us."

Weiland was undergoing a change. When he and Kretz moved into a loft apartment in downtown Los Angeles, the drummer watched his bandmate transforming before his eyes. "I saw him delving a lot more into the arts – poetry, strange novels, watching really avant-garde movies," says Kretz. "You gotta develop this 'tortured artist' intellect, and you have to be able to express it in your own form. And that's what he did."

Hollywood in the early 90s wasn't a million miles away from Hollywood throughout the 80s. Money ruled everything. The Sunset Strip clubs had a pay-to-play policy, which meant a band had to bring in a few hundred people just to cover the outlay. For Mighty Joe Young, that was easier said than done.

"We were always on the outside," says Kretz. "You hear about these unsigned bands that have this huge crowd base and have a thousand people at their shows. We were never that band."

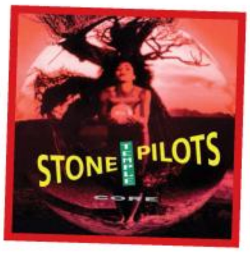
They managed to bag shows at venues with names like Club Lingerie and The Coconut Teaser, and 100 miles down the Pacific coast in San Diego, where Dean DeLeo lived.

It was at a long-forgotten East Hollywood dive called Shamrocks where the future suddenly opened up for them. They had recorded a demo comprising a handful of songs that eventually ended up on *Core*. The demo tape came to the attention of Atlantic Records A&R man Tom Carolan, who saw the band at Shamrock and offered them a deal. He also suggested they find a new name, as Mighty Joe Young was already taken by an aging bluesman.

As a kid, Weiland had been weirdly fascinated by STP Oil Treatment, a lubricant used in motor engines. He suggested they fit a name around the initials. One early suggestion, Shirley Temple's Pussy, was rejected for being too fratboyish. But the next one stuck: Stone Temple Pilots were born.

Over the course of a few months at the end of 1991 and into '92, STP recorded their debut album with producer Brendan O'Brien at Rumbo Recorders in the San Fernando Valley. Some of the songs that appeared on their demo were retooled for the album. Newer tunes were added, among them the stuttering *Sex Type Thing*, an anti-rape song that found Weiland assuming the character of the protagonist with barely concealed distaste (something which the band's critics later seized upon with misguided glee), and *Plush*, a vivid if abstract dissection of obsessive relationships partly inspired by the story of a murdered woman in San Diego. According to the DeLeos and Kretz, the sessions were a breeze.

"We all had the same vision at the time," says Robert DeLeo. "As you can see from the history of the band, that didn't always last. But back then there was a strong camaraderie and vision for what we were trying to achieve with that record."



Early promo shot: (l-r) Scott Weiland, Robert DeLeo, Eric Kretz, Dean DeLeo.

Released in September 1992, *Core* was a confident debut. While it nodded to the prevailing alternative rock trends that had been shoved front and centre by the success of Nirvana and Pearl Jam, it also had a flavour of its own, not least in Dean DeLeo's complex, textured guitar work. Stone Temple Pilots knew they had a good record, one that did justice to their illustrious forebears on Atlantic.

"Since we'd signed to Atlantic Records, which was one of the greatest labels in the world, I was like: 'If we fail and get dropped, there was no coming back from getting dropped from the top,'" says Eric Kretz. "That was my biggest fear."

His concerns proved unfounded. Thanks to help from MTV, who pushed the videos for *Sex Type Thing* and *Plush*, the album started to sell steadily. It helped that they had a magnetic frontman who embraced the limelight while so many of his peers pushed it away. Unlike Kurt Cobain or Eddie Vedder, Scott Weiland was a natural-born rock star.

"I've got to tell you that term, 'rock star', I don't care much for it," says Dean DeLeo. "But I never really looked at Scott like that. I looked at him like my brother. He was my brother, and we were in this thing together. We all wanted the same thing – to make an indelible mark on the face of music."

"WE ALL WANTED THE SAME THING – TO MAKE AN INDELIBLE MARK ON THE FACE OF MUSIC."

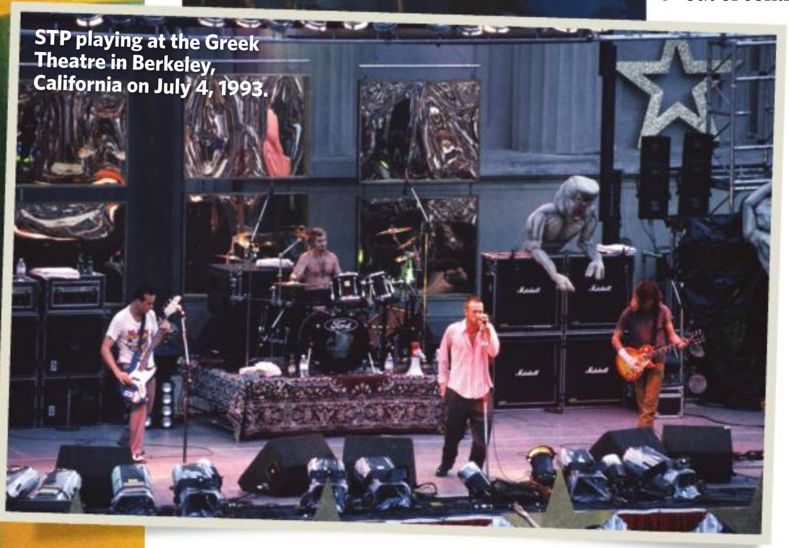
DEAN DeLEO

In November 1992, STP embarked on their first national tour. Holed up in an RV with an equipment truck trailing them, they criss-crossed America, stopping off at such sweatboxes as Washington DC's 9.30 Club, the Phantasy Nightclub in Lakewood, Ohio, and Club Downunder in Tallahassee, Florida. Not every show was a ringing success. At one gig in Buffalo, New York, the band counted seven people in the venue, as well as themselves – including the bartender and the bouncer. The next night, in Toronto, the club they played was sold out.

Their mettle was tested early the following year when they opened for thrash linchpins Megadeth. Every night they would face down a front row who would flip them the bird or simply turn their backs.

"Scott really had to start working the audience," says Kretz. "They hated him, they hated us, they hated anybody who was opening for Megadeth. We definitely earned our stripes on that tour."

Feeling the heat in the early 90s: Scott Weiland (left) and Eric Kretz.



STP playing at the Greek Theatre in Berkeley, California on July 4, 1993.

While Stone Temple Pilots were out on the road, *Core* began to cook with gas. The success of the Seattle bands had spawned a public appetite for anything that sounded grungey, edgy, anthemic and preferably all three, and STP fitted the bill.

"I don't know if you could ever be prepared for that rocket ride," says Robert. "Our A&R guy, Tom Carolan, said something I'll always remember: 'You gotta fasten your seat belts.' He was right. We were on the road for fourteen months. Not a lot of people can do that. But it's the mental and emotional side of what occurs that plays with your soul."

If anyone was playing with Stone Temple Pilots' soul, it was the media. While the band had their champions in the rock press on both sides of the Atlantic, the mainstream media piled in on them. The *New York Times* compared them unfavourably to Pearl Jam and Nirvana; *Rolling Stone* voted them the Worst New Band Of The Year.

From being a cool little outfit doing their own thing in the LA clubs, STP suddenly became the press's whipping boys. They were accused of everything from cynical plagiarism to the corporatization of grunge. The criticism snowballed – it became a weird form of schoolyard bullying. Eric Kretz and Robert DeLeo look back on it all with the grace that only a quarter of a century's distance can bring. "Sometimes you just take the punishment," says Kretz. "You just say: 'You know what? I can turn it around to my benefit.' And critics aren't always right."

"We weren't making records for them," says Robert DeLeo. "Most of those people didn't even listen to our records. They just kind of copycat wrote what everyone else was writing."

Dean DeLeo is a different matter. The critical kickings meted out to the band still rankle after all this time. When the subject is brought up, there's a pause, and the conversational temperature drops by several degrees.

"I've been making records for twenty-five years," he says eventually. "So I've earned where I don't need to entertain a question like that. If I was asking you questions, and you had a decade and a half under your belt, I wouldn't ask that kind of question. You're asking me about something that happened twenty-five years ago. I wouldn't even know how to answer that."

If the criticism hurt the band, it certainly didn't hurt them commercially. By the end of 1993, *Core* had topped three million sales. But there were darker clouds gathering on the horizon – ones that would irrevocably change the band.

On June 12, 1993, Stone Temple Pilots kicked off their Bar-B-Q-Mitvah Tour, a kind of mini-Lollapalooza package tour also featuring Texan loons Butthole Surfers, Oklahoma weird-beards the Flaming Lips, funk pioneers Basehead and cult punk heroes fIREHOSE.

"We told the promoters we want to do shows where shows haven't been done – like fishing ponds and golf courses," says Kretz. "Lollapalooza was out at the time, and they were trying to do something different. We thought: 'How do *we* do something different? Well, fuck it, let's try to make something all our own.' And it was quite a big party."

For Scott Weiland, that party was about to spiral out of control. In his autobiography, 2011's *Not Dead And Not For Sale*, the singer recalled his fascination with heroin – or at least its then-distant allure. "I associated heroin with romance, glamour, danger and rock'n'roll excess," he wrote. "More than that, I was curious about the connection between heroin and creativity. At that point, I couldn't imagine my life without at least dabbling with the King Of Drugs."

When the tour hit New York, Weiland decided to take the plunge. When other, unnamed musicians clubbed together to buy some China White heroin, he added his name to the order. For that night's show, Stone Temple Pilots decided to dress up as Kiss. Before he hit the stage in his Paul Stanley drag, Weiland snorted heroin for the first time. "I was undisturbed and unafraid," he recalled. "A free-floating man in a space without demons and doubts. The show was beautiful. The high was beautiful."

No matter how he gussied it up in poetry, a line had been crossed – one that the singer would never truly come back across.

"The start of his heavy drug intake definitely came towards the end of that tour," says Kretz. "Before that we were all heavy drinkers. I'd watch him drink until he passed out. He didn't do it all the time, but it happened. But that tour changed things. He learned some bad habits, and unfortunately they stayed with him."

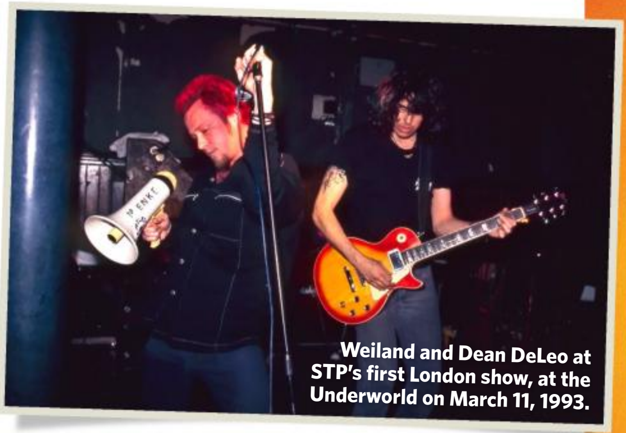
By the time the campaign for *Core* was over, the album was well on its way to selling eight million copies. Success provided scant armour against the brickbats of the press. Instead, STP doubled down and channelled their anger, frustration and songwriting craft into a glorious follow-up, *Purple*. Like its predecessor, it sold in the multimillions – and it silenced their critics.

But for Scott Weiland, success – and curiosity – came at a cost. His on-off-on-again drug habit would define his life over the next 20 years as much as his music did. He fell into a tragically predictable cycle of arrests, rehab and relapses, while his relationship with his STP bandmates ebbed and flowed, with singer and band splitting and reuniting multiple times over the years, like a married couple who couldn't live with each other but couldn't live without each other too.

"WE WERE ON THE CUSP OF AN EXCITING MOVEMENT IN ROCK'N'ROLL, AND WE WERE PART OF IT. NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT AWAY FROM US."

ERIC KRETZ

ALAMY/GETTY



Weiland and Dean DeLeo at STP's first London show, at the Underworld on March 11, 1993.

In December 2015, the inevitable happened. Weiland was found dead in the bunk of his tour bus before a gig in Minnesota with his new band The Wildabouts. A combination of drugs was found in his system. The cause of death was determined to have been an accidental overdose of cocaine, MDA and alcohol. His former bandmates in Stone Temple Pilots released a statement paying tribute to their fallen colleague: "You were gifted beyond words. Part of that gift was part of your curse."

"I think about Scott a lot," Robert DeLeo says now. "Every single day. Every aspect of his character, from the beginning of the band to the day he passed. We went through a hell of a lot together."

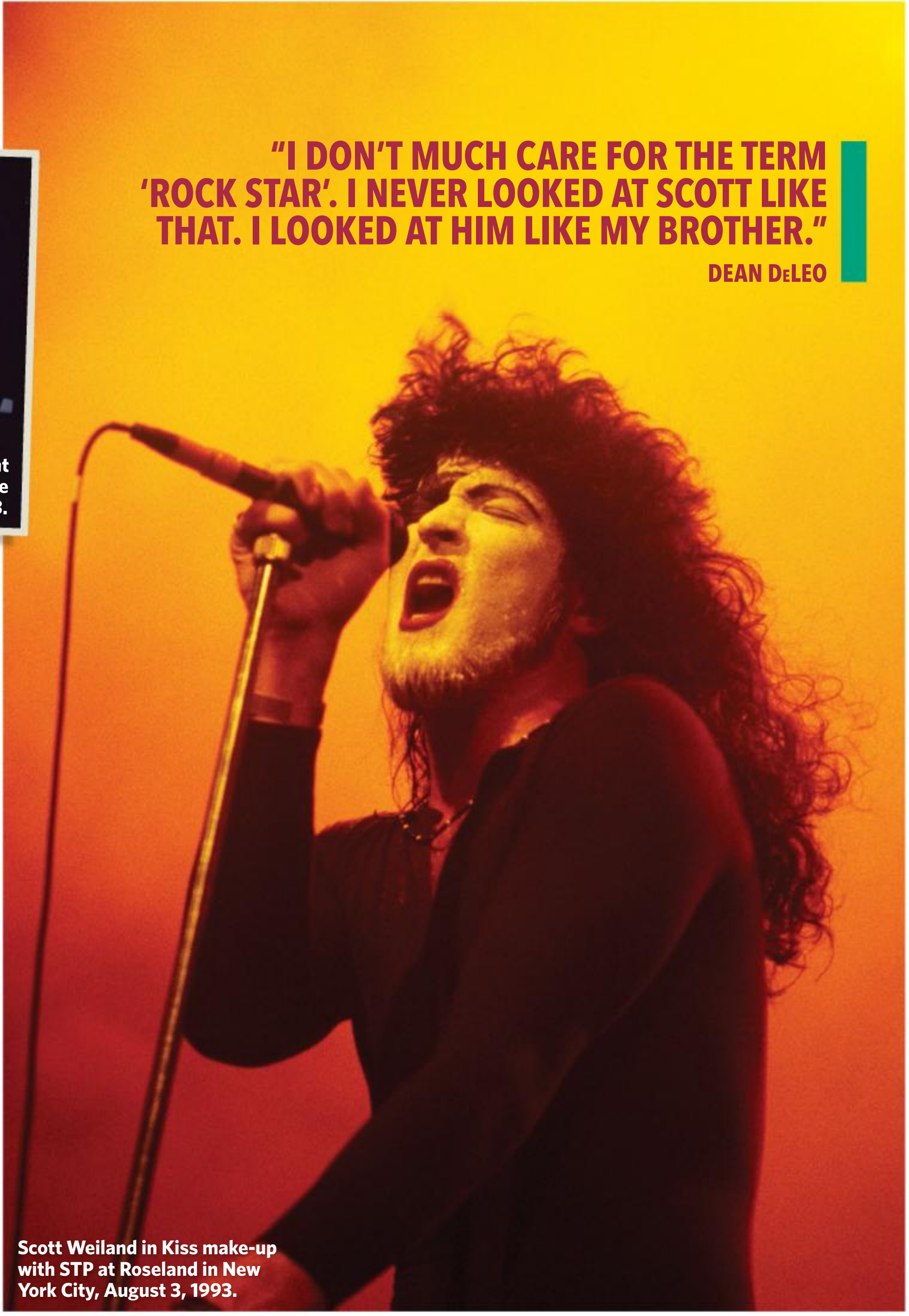
A new, deluxe 25th-anniversary reissue of *Core* stands in part as a tribute to Weiland, but also as a marker of Stone Temple Pilots' tenacity. Other bands would have crumbled in the face of opprobrium, but STP didn't just transcend it, they turned the tables on their critics. Today, they should finally get the respect they deserve.

"Man, we were just so young and hungry back then," says Eric Kretz. "We were fired up to make a difference, we truly were. We were on the cusp of an exciting movement in rock'n'roll, and we were part of it. No one can take that away from us."

The 25th anniversary edition of Core (reviewed on p99) is out on September 29 via Rhino.

"I DON'T MUCH CARE FOR THE TERM 'ROCK STAR'. I NEVER LOOKED AT SCOTT LIKE THAT. I LOOKED AT HIM LIKE MY BROTHER."

DEAN DeLEO



Scott Weiland in Kiss make-up with STP at Roseland in New York City, August 3, 1993.

GORDON MILNE/ICONIC PIX/GETTY/REX

"PEOPLE STILL WANT TO HEAR THESE SONGS"

Why Stone Temple Pilots could still rise from the ashes of tragedy once more.

On July 20, news broke that Chester Bennington had been found dead in his Los Angeles home. Although he was best known for fronting Linkin Park, Bennington had also stood in for Scott Weiland in Stone Temple Pilots between 2013 and 2015, and he sang on their acclaimed *High Rise* EP.

"I remember we were rehearsing for one of the last couple of shows we were doing with Chester in 2015," says STP's Robert DeLeo. "We were in a rehearsal room, and Chris Cornell walked in – he was rehearsing next door. We all said hi and hugged. I look back at that moment now and think: "I would have never, ever had the thought that those two guys would no longer be with us.'"

Bennington's death came a year and a half after that of Scott Weiland. But despite having lost both their singers, DeLeo says there's a chance that the Stone Temple Pilots name could be resurrected with a new frontman.

"Yes, I think there is," says Robert. "We worked very, very, very hard at creating Stone Temple Pilots, and unfortunately one of the guys who created that with us is gone. I just feel that when the time is right, and it's appropriate, we're going to continue.

"It's not a sudden, overnight decision. It could take months, it could take a couple of years. It doesn't have to look good on paper, it just has to feel good. And I think people still want to hear those songs."

Chester Bennington fronting STP at the BB&T Center, Florida, September 2013.

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"Rock 'n' roll is my religion. It's what I believe in"

Guitarist with Springsteen's E Street band, leader of his own band, label owner, actor (Silvio Dante in *The Sopranos*), radio host… And there's a lot more to **Steven Van Zandt** than that.

Words: **Paul Rees**

In every sense, the man born Steven Lento has led a gloriously colourful life. At one time or other – and often all at once – these last forty-plus years, he has been a rock'n'roll musician, activist, actor, broadcaster and educator. Along the way he co-piloted two great bands out of his adopted New Jersey – the E Street Band and the Asbury Jukes – and fronted his own band the Disciples Of Soul. He has founded a record company, Wicked Cool, devised a globally-syndicated radio show, *Underground Garage*, and created not one but two pop-culture icons: strip-club-owning consiglieri Silvio Dante for David Chase's groundbreaking TV mob saga *The Sopranos*, and his own bandana-sporting, gypsy-maverick on-stage alter-ego, Little Steven. When in 1982 he married his actress wife, Maureen Santoro, the couple were sung down the aisle by soul giant Percy Sledge, Bruce Springsteen acted as best man and the presiding minister was Little Richard.

"The trick is to be able to keep it all going simultaneously, but part of the joy of life is integrating all of your interests," suggests the man better known as Steven Van Zandt, aka Little Steven. "It keeps everything fresh and you never get bored. Plus I found out a long time ago that if I focus on just one thing I tend to obsess and overdo it, whereas if I have five things on the go, that's about right for me."

It's a hot spring day in Manhattan and Van Zandt is working out of his downtown office, an hour's drive from his home in Jersey. Momentarily he is distracted by his wife dropping by and insisting that he take delivery of their King Charles spaniel, and then again by the question of whether or not he ought to retrieve his car sometime soon. "Am I going to need to go out again? Yes? No?" he asks of his assistant rhetorically. "Yes! Jesus, I was a fucking idiot to park it up in the first place."

Domestic dramas aside, Van Zandt is very much in the room. Sixty-seven this November, he is still recognisably the outsize character who was generally first sighted sidling up next to Springsteen at the microphone in the mid-to-late 70s, the Boss's left-stage foil and right-hand man. The voice and gestures are exaggerated, the yadda-yadda Italian-Americanisms together with animated chocolate-brown eyes suggest pathos and smarts. Fixed in place on his head is a bandana, black, the kind of which he has sported all this time – and not to hide premature baldness, but head scars sustained in a car accident as a teenager.

Get him on a subject that he is particularly passionate about – which is to say all of the above – and he lights up, his words spilling out a mile a minute. Right now the topic up for discussion is *Soulfire*, the sixth album he has made with the now 15-piece Disciples Of Soul and their first in 18 years. On it, Van Zandt revisits a collection of songs that he originally wrote, and invariably produced, for other artists including Southside Johnny And The Asbury Jukes and R&B stomper Gary U.S. Bonds. Altogether the record's 12 tracks revel in the 'New Jersey sound' that Van Zandt did as much as anyone to hone. A strident, joyful, heart-racing, foot-pounding melange of rock guitars and R&B horns, the sound rose up along the Jersey Shore in the early 70s and went hot-rodding right on into the next decade and beyond.

"Without realising it I sort of created my own genre."

"Without realising it I sort of created my own genre," Van Zandt says. "These songs don't belong in any one category or sit in a format. Which if you cared about the modern world would be a problem. Fortunately I really don't. And the ▷

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES

Born to run: Little Steven with Bruce Springsteen And The E Street Band in 1975: (l to r) Clarence Clemons, Springsteen, Little Steven, Max Weinberg, Garry Tallent.

further we get from the roots of where they're coming from, the more unique they sound.

"No doubt, over the years my own thing has got completely forgotten, and it was my own fault for walking away from it when I did. I got into a lot of other crafts, like acting and writing. Before you knew it, the best part of twenty years had gone by. So I'm starting over again and also trying to make amends."

Van Zandt was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1950, right on the cusp of the rock'n'roll era. His dad played a bit of trumpet, but there was nothing about his early childhood that foretold to him the world of possibilities just beyond the horizon. That wouldn't come until 1964, and by which time his parents had separated, his mother had got remarried to William Brewster Van Zandt and young Steven had moved with them to live in Middletown Township, New Jersey. It was there, on the star-crossed night of February 9, that The Beatles were beamed into the family's living room by the medium of television, specifically the Fab Four's first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

"You can't be stupider than me. I give the best advice in the world, because I've fked up in every possible way."**

"The day before that, there were literally no bands in America," Van Zandt recalls. "Day after, everybody had a band."

He was no exception. In quick succession he formed The Whirlwinds, next The Mates, and then joined a third short-lived group, The Shadows, that was cast in the image of the British Invasion bands. He was sent home from Middletown High for having his hair too long, but graduated in 1968, and by then he had met the other ace young guitarist in the area, Springsteen, his senior by one year.

Van Zandt went on to play bass guitar alongside the elder hotshot in Steel Mill, a wannabe Allman Brothers Band, and then the Bruce Springsteen Band, aping Van Morrison's big-band folk-rock. They built up followings in Jersey and nearby Virginia, but couldn't break out to become more than just local big noises. Springsteen's later songs refract this period in grand-romantic terms, carrying with them the sense that they were desperados on the run from their dead-end town and propelled by the idea that they were meant for better things. Ask Van Zandt now if the way that it played out was quite so evocative and his response is an eruption of laughter.

"No, no, not at all," he elaborates. "There were only a dozen or so bands in the area that got out of the garage. We all became friendly, because it was a very underground thing and we were freaks, misfits and outcasts together. The Shore was a fucking wasteland. It was a ghetto. We had race riots. People had stopped visiting, so it was no longer a resort. Bruce and me, right away I think, realised we were a little different from the others, more dedicated.

"Slowly, everybody who had a choice took it: they went to college, or the military, or got a job. Eventually it was just him and me who were stood there, the last outcasts that didn't really belong anywhere. People always tell me how persistent we were and stuck to our guns, trying to romanticise the whole thing. The truth is we couldn't do anything else. We were completely incapable, so had no fucking choice. I would run into Bruce on weekends up in Greenwich Village, a bus ride from Jersey. We were out there trying to steal ideas, because New York City was a year ahead of Jersey and in those days it was all about what was coming next. Truly, every month a miracle would happen."

Early in '73, Van Zandt skipped town to go off and play guitar on tour with a doo-wop quartet out of Philadelphia, The Dovells. They criss-crossed the States, ending up in Miami, where Van Zandt picked out for himself a suitcaseful of lurid beach shirts. Returning in his new garb to frigid grey Jersey, he soon acquired the nickname 'Miami' Steve. In his absence, Springsteen had been signed as a solo artist to Columbia Records and was about to release his debut album, *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.*

CAMERPRESS/

Nils Lofgren (left) and Van Zandt with Bruce And The E Street Band in January 2016 during *The River* tour.

GETTY

Van Zandt threw in his lot with another local hero, John Lyon, 'Southside' to his friends and supporters, and together they formed Southside Johnny And The Asbury Jukes, and took up residency at a club called the Stone Pony right on the boardwalk.

When it came time for the Jukes to venture out of Jersey, Van Zandt corralled a group of horn players to flesh out their touring sound and christened them the Miami Horns. For the next four years, on sweat-soaked club stages at first and then in the studio, and with Van Zandt as their chief songwriter, arranger and producer, the Jukes established the heart and soul of their home state sound. This burst into stereo life on the Jukes' first album, 1976's *I Don't Want To Go Home*, and on the brace of joyous albums that followed: the following year's *This Time It's For Real* and *Hearts Of Stone* in '78. According to Van Zandt, their trailblazing was once again born out of necessity.

"We were a bar band, so you had to make people dance," he says. "Once upon a time people danced to rock'n'roll, and that was the same way that The Beatles and the Stones had started out. There's just something magical about that combination of Motown, Stax, Atlantic soul and New Orleans R&B with rock guitar, and that became its own thing. By the time we got into the record business we had our own little niche, but even then it wasn't hip. We had to make a living playing live, because we weren't getting on the radio.

"Music is basically to do with five crafts, which are learning your instrument, arranging, writing, performing and recording. To me the main one of all those is when you get on stage and have to interact with other band members and an audience. That's also the one that I see disappearing, because people are going straight from learning to play to selling their music over the internet. They're skipping the most important phase of a career, which is to be a bar band."

Even before the first Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes record got off the ground, Van Zandt had found himself back in Springsteen's fold. By 1975 his old friend's first two albums had tanked and he was making his third under intense do-or-die pressure at the Record Plant in New York City. The sessions had dragged on for months, and when Van Zandt dropped by one evening, he found Springsteen, his manager Mike Appel and co-producer John Landau agonising over the horn parts to most Jersey-sounding song on *Born To Run*, *Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out*. Van Zandt leapt in and arranged for them a Motown-kissed groove in ten minutes flat.

"The truth is Bruce and I couldn't do anything else. We were completely incapable, so had no choice."

After that, Springsteen invited him into the E Street Band. Van Zandt expected his tenure to last no longer than it would take them to fulfil their immediate obligations, which were a handful of shows booked to warm-up the record. Instead *Born To Run* rocketed out of the gate and he was at Springsteen's side for the next seven years.

"It was a big deal, my joining the E Street Band, because I was just as popular as Bruce was locally," he says now. "So that when I called him Boss, people started to take it seriously. I just saw in him something that was special and that I didn't quite have, and nor did anyone else.

"There were also certain things that he wasn't so good at. Turned out I was a better arranger and producer than him. I'm a good songwriter too, so was able to help arrange his songs from that point of view. If I hadn't been able to contribute so considerably, I wouldn't have done it, because I'm not exactly the sort of person who works for someone else."

On stage, Van Zandt was the driver of the E Street Band's stupendously tight backbeat, and in the studio a voice of reason and counsel. Following the brilliant but bleak and troubled '78 album *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, Springsteen made him co-producer for his next album, 1980's *The River*. Van Zandt's imprint was evident on the greater part of that double record. After Springsteen flew solo for 1982's *Nebraska*, Van Zandt was back in the producer's chair for *Born In The USA*. That one was very much his kind of record, the band cutting it live in the room, and full of wide-eyed songs that hurried to their choruses, but he upped and left before it was even released.

While Springsteen had been labouring over the sparse *Nebraska*, Van Zandt had assembled a big band of his own, the Disciples Of Soul, and with them made a euphoric rock-soul record, *Men Without Women*. It hadn't sold much, but he'd got enough of a taste of his own thing to want more. Also, he was going through a political awakening. In 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States, and Van Zandt became appalled at how American interests were being expanded into the Central American countries El Salvador and Nicaragua. He poured that into a second album with the Disciples Of Soul, 1984's excellent *Voice Of America*, and very specifically on pointed protest-rock songs such as *I Am A Patriot* and *Los Desaparecidos*.

In 1985 he threw his weight behind the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and founded Artists United Against Apartheid to encourage other musicians to snub lucrative offers to play the whites-only, high-roller resort of Sun City in the country's North West Province. Springsteen, Bob Dylan, U2, Run DMC and Tom Petty were among the 49 artists who joined him in performing *Sun City*, the song he wrote to be its rallying point.

It was nothing like the mainstream smash that another superstar-laden issue-song, USA For Africa's *We Are the World*, was that same year, but *Sun City* nevertheless helped to bring apartheid into an unforgiving international spotlight. It also succeeded in raising greater awareness of the plight of its most compelling opponent, the ANC's Nelson Mandela, then serving the twenty-first year of a life sentence at Robben Island jail. By the time *Sun City* was out, Springsteen was enshrined as the rock superstar of the 80s and *Born In The USA* was on its way to selling more than 30 million copies.

"Oh, you can't be stupider than me," Van Zandt says, again roaring with laughter. "That's why I give the best advice in the world. Not on account of me being smart, but because I've fucked up in every way possible that a person can fuck up. Leaving the E Street Band when I did, it's one of those things you look back on and say was a tragic mistake.

"Even still, I probably would not have done the South Africa thing had I stayed. That's likely ▷

Still delivering the goods: playing BluesFest at The O2 in London in 2016.

As Silvio Dante in TV Mob series *The Sopranos* in 1999.

going to be the one accomplishment of my life that means something, so you can also look at it that way. Now, I don't think it will be remembered, but I know that I made a considerable contribution to bringing down that government and getting Mandela out of jail. I feel like that is some justification for missing out on those tens of millions of dollars. Meanwhile, as I was sneaking into Soweto for a meeting, hidden under a blanket in the back of a car, the E Street guys were all off buying their mansions."

Van Zandt made further admirable records with the Disciples Of Soul, including 1987's *Freedom – No Compromise*, its impassioned rock boosted by elastic Latin rhythms, and two years later a foray into Prince-style funk-rock territory with *Revolution*. The wider world barely noticed. Van Zandt now puts his gradual shift to the margins down to his own refusal to stick to one musical identity, and the fact that he didn't have a manager to smooth his path.

He had all but vanished from view by the end of the 90s and when he got handed an entirely unexpected third act. In January 1997 he inducted proto-garage band The Rascals into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Watching the ceremony on TV, writer-director David Chase was struck by Van Zandt's comic shtick. At the time, Chase was looking to cast a sprawling Mafia drama that he was planning for the cable channel HBO. He called Van Zandt and invited him to audition for the lead role of antihero mob boss Tony Soprano. Never having acted outside of a school play and reluctant to shoulder the show, Van Zandt suggested instead a support character to Chase, Silvio Dante, who he had written up into a short story treatment of his own.

From when it was first broadcast in the US in January 1999 and over seven seasons of *The Sopranos*, Van Zandt, in a towering pompadour wig, delivered an acutely observed, finely sketched performance. His Dante was by turns funny, wry and chilling, in a landmark drama that revolutionised the scope of American television. He followed it up by writing, producing and taking the lead role in three seasons of another well-received mob drama, *Lilyhammer*, playing a hitman exiled through the Witness Protection Programme to the near-titular Norwegian town.

"I didn't have any desire to be an actor, so I'll be forever grateful to David Chase for persuading me otherwise," he says. "I got a wonderful burst of energy that learning a new craft gives you. In *The Sopranos* I was able to use my relationship with Bruce as a model for Silvio's with Tony. Silvio was the only character that didn't want to be boss. He was comfortable with being the right-hand man."

"I made a considerable contribution to getting Mandela out of jail."

As fate would have it, just as *The Sopranos* was starting up, Springsteen, who had also gone off and tried to forge a fresh direction of his own with unspectacular results, decided to reactivate the E Street Band. Van Zandt re-signed up, and from 1999's grandstanding Reunion Tour onwards, and despite the loss of core members Clarence Clemons and Danny Federici, they have gone blazing into a new century. Their singular achievement, Van Zandt maintains, is that they are not getting by on nostalgia, "or on people's memories of what we once used to be. Bruce is still writing to an extremely high level, and we're still able to do three-and-a-half hour shows, and we bring it every single night."

Alongside his twin rock'n'roll and TV careers, Van Zandt has continued branching out. He launched his Wicked Cool label in 2006 to provide a home for venerated and emerging garage rockers alike. In 2007 he established the Rock And Roll Forever Foundation, devising a curriculum to teach the history of rock'n'roll and that is free for use in middle and high schools. And having switched on the radio and discovered that "rock'n'roll was gone from the airwaves", since 2003 he has hosted *Little Steven's Underground Garage*, which he devised and writes. Syndicated through the Sirius satellite network, the show goes out to a weekly audience of more than a million listeners in the US alone. Van Zandt now serves as an executive programme director at Sirius for both an extended Underground Garage channel and a second one that he subsequently devised for the service, Outlaw Country.

"People said rock'n'radio would never work in this day and age, but of course it does," he says. "We have close to five thousand tunes on the *Underground Garage* playlist now and I pick every one of them. In that respect it's an archive of sixty years of rock'n'roll and the roots of it, which was a true renaissance era when the best music being made was also the most commercial. Also, it's giving new bands a chance to be heard and who would not have that anywhere else. Third, it allows me to show my gratitude to the greatest artists in the world and that I grew up with, like The Beatles, the Stones and The Kinks, not to mention the pioneers such as Chuck Berry and Little Richard. I'm also the only one that plays the Stones, Paul McCartney or Ray Davies when they have a new record out.

"Rock'n roll is an endangered species, and I think it's really important that it continues to exist and be accessible to future generations. Hopefully what I'm doing on the radio will continue to live on beyond me."

In the immediate future, Van Zandt hits the road with the Disciples Of Soul this month. Beyond that and juggling all of his other activities, he plans to do more TV for half of each year (he says he has seven different scripts currently in development), and tour in the summer with either his own band or Springsteen's. For now, though, the dog is barking for his attention and he has a car to retrieve.

"Rock'n'roll is my religion," he announces as he scoops up his keys. "It's what I believe in and does all of the things for you that religion is supposed to. It's inspiring, motivating, enlightening and educational. And, goddamn it, country to country, it's still the greatest form of communication that we have."

Soulfire is out now via UMC. Little Steven & The Disciples Of Soul play UK dates from November 4 to 16.

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CHEAP THRILLS
THE £50 RECORD STORE CHALLENGE

The Darkness

Words: **Dave Everley** Portraits: **Will Ireland**

The world is in a cataclysmic state. The Middle East is a powder keg ready to explode. The lunatics have taken over the asylum in Washington, Moscow and Pyongyang. The global thermostat is busted, the ice caps are melting, and we'd all best start inflating our rubber water wings and learn how to paddle.

The Darkness are furious at this state of affairs. So furious, in fact, that they've channelled their rage into a track on their new album *Pinewood Smile*. The song in question focuses its anger on the crumbling transport infrastructure of this once-great nation. Its title? *Southern Trains.*

"Me and Dan were up in London for some of the writing process and it was the most dreadful experience," says the band's frontman Justin Hawkins. "There was so much arse-clownery involved. We managed to get seats, then the carriage filled up until it was packed. Dan was trying to eat his burrito with some commuter's bum literally in his face. And the place just stank."

Such hot-button concerns are reflected in the song's verité lyrics: *'It's a journey into pure despair… I can smell piss and shit in the air.'* So is it a metaphor for geo-political turmoil?

"No," says Hawkins. "It's just about how shit Southern Trains are."

No matter what's going on outside your window, the world is a better place with The Darkness in it. *Pinewood Smile* is the quartet's third album since their 2011 reunion and, like their best records, it fizzes with an alchemical mix of large-testicled chutzpah, arch self-deprecation and blockbusting tunes.

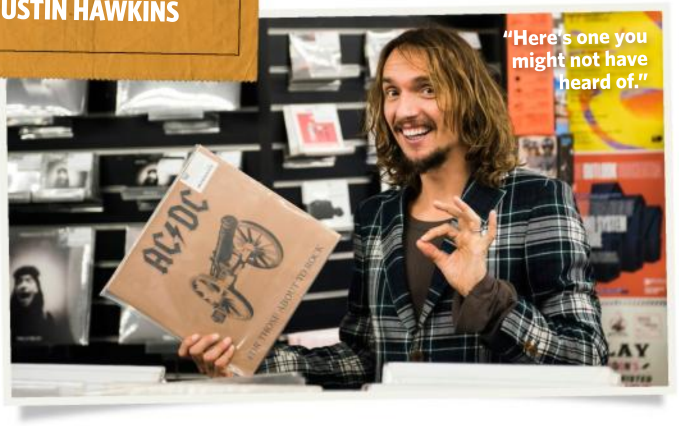
"The last album [2015's *The Last Of Our Kind*] had a backs-to-the-wall vibe," says bassist Frankie Poullain, a man unafraid to rock a triple denim jacket/trousers/waistcoat ensemble in private or public. "There were problems with Ed [former drummer Ed Graham]. That was tough and traumatic for everyone."

"This one is fronts-to-the-wall," beams Justin, himself sporting a natty checked suit. "Before, we were just cowering in corners of the showers, now we're top dogs. We're offering our arses to people."

With that vivid image seared in everyone's brains, it's time for The Darkness to hit record store-cum-hipsters' hangout Rough Trade East in the heart of London's trendy Shoreditch district for *Classic Rock*'s Record Shop Challenge. There's the promise of £50 of guilt-free spending money to get them through the door, although the prospect of flicking through some racks of proper old-school is lure enough.

> "I want to find either of the two first Dread Zeppelin albums. I sold my original copies."
> **JUSTIN HAWKINS**

"I want to find either of the two first Dread Zeppelin albums," Justin jokes, referring to the long-forgotten 90s comedy rock band whose shtick involved reggae-style Led Zeppelin covers sung by an overweight Elvis impersonator. "I sold my original copies back home. The shop shut down and the building's been empty for years, but I think those records are still in the window."



"Here's one you might not have heard of."

Instantly, they split up. Dan Hawkins, rock-solid guitarist and Justin's younger brother, gravitates to a wall of vinyl featuring a tediously predictable array of 'Albums You Must Listen To Or Your Dog Will Die'-type LPs featuring the usual suspects: the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Marvin Gaye's soul classic *What's Goin' On*, The Beatles' *Revolver*. Ignoring these, he picks up a copy of *The Baby Huey Story: The Living Legend* by cult soul man Baby Huey, released posthumously in 1971.

"What the fuck is this?" he says, indicating the portrait of the heroically Afro'd, 350lb singer on the cover. "And what the fuck is he wearing on the back? Is that a mu-mu? That's fucking amazing. I've bought loads of records just because of the cover. In fact we sometimes buy stuff just to look at the outfits."

Growing up, Dan and Justin bought their records from Andy's Records and Our Price in their home town Lowestoft. "The bargain bin was a good place to find new music,"says Dan. "You know you've made it when you see one of your own albums in there next to *The Best Of Michael Jackson*."

Dan has his sights on something by 60s crooner-turned-avant garde eardrum-botherer Scott Walker. "When I moved to London, I worked as a receptionist in a reprographics company, and one of the guys in charge used to play Scott Walker and Patti Smith all day. It just reminds me of moving to London." He spots a Walker compilation CD. "This looks good. And only £6.99. Bargain."

A few aisles along, Frankie is flicking through the 'Soundtracks' section. "I like this stuff," he says. "Initially it was all the Sergio Leone stuff when I was younger, but I'm starting to get into Phillip Glass. I like his violin concerto. It's a powerful piece of music."

Frankie's fondness for the orchestral isn't surprising. His father was a classical violinist who won a scholarship at the Guildhall School Of Music, played in the BBC Symphony Orchestra and helped found respected Scottish chamber music collective the Edinburgh ▷

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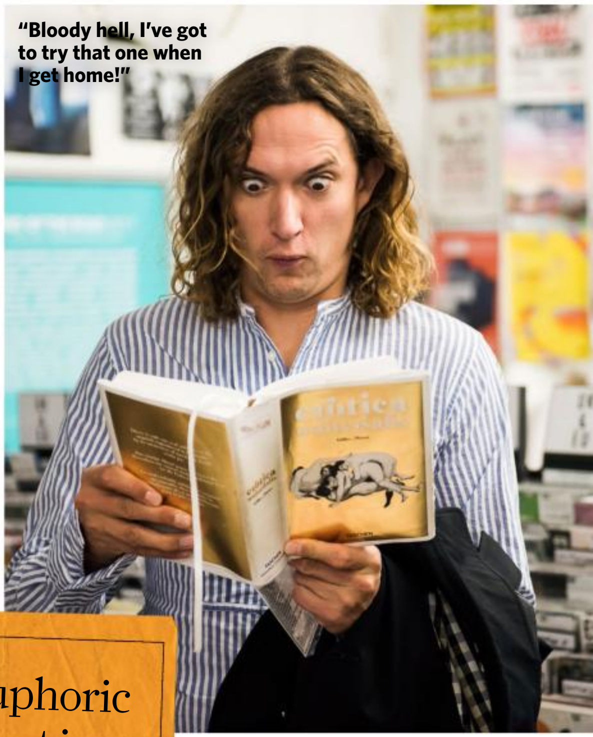


"Bloody hell, I've got to try that one when I get home!"

Rufus and Justin dig in to some vinyl treasure.

Justing wears his infuences on... his fingers.

"The euphoric element is what I think makes The Darkness special. We've got that back."

FRANKIE POULLAIN

Quartet. "Then he drank too much and fucked it all up," Frankie says unsentimentally.

But it's the early 70s that is the bassist's favourite era: David Bowie, Lou Reed, Neil Young. Away from the 'Soundtracks' section, he picks up a vinyl copy of Neil Young's *On The Beach*, the Canadian's bleak, edgy 1974 masterpiece.

"This is his comedown album," he says. "He's angry, pissed off, doing loads of coke, his voice is all cracked. There were so many interesting records at that time. Everyone was fucked up. People were on a trip in the late 60s but it wasn't sustainable. It was based on people thinking that human nature is capable of more than it actually is. It's not. Humans are flawed creatures. All those people were basically on a massive comedown."

If The Darkness have a comedown record, it's their second album, 2005's *One Way Ticket To Hell… And Back*. Poullain views it with little fondness – unsurprising, given that he left the band while they were making it.

"I don't really like the way it sounds," he says. "It's too overproduced for me. It sounds like there's a lack of real energy and there's no euphoria on there. The euphoric element is what I think makes The Darkness special. We've got that back."

All three original members put this down in part to new drummer Rufus Taylor, who stepped in when his predecessor, Emily Dolan Davies, left less than six months after she joined . "Rufus has brought more ambition," Justin says of Taylor. "Before, it was, like, 'We can't do that.' Now it's a case of, 'We can do this! And this! And that!' Everything's just more…" He searches for the right word. "…Rufusy? Roofy? You know what I mean."

Rufus is the son of Queen drummer Roger Taylor, and has inherited both his old man's blond-bombshell looks and his taste for 70s rock. Did he ever find himself saying: "Come on, dad, not *Radio bloody Gaga* again" on long car journeys?

"No, not really," he says, politely deflecting the question. "He had every album ever released, ever. So growing up I was surrounded by everything from Led Zeppelin and T.Rex to crazy jazz stuff."

What are you looking for today?

"I heard an amazing old disco/funk song on the radio the other day called *Dance Dance Dance* by Claudja Barry," he says. "It came on the radio when we were all in the car on the way down to Cornwall. It was about five a.m. and we all just went completely silent. It was fucking awesome. I can't find it anywhere – it's not even on iTunes."

Justin is also drawing a blank. "No sign of Dread Zeppelin," he says. "Actually, I haven't looked." Instead he's sifting through the racks of in search of an album by 70s funk goliaths the Gap Band. "You know that song *You Dropped The Bomb On Me?* [Begins singing it] I love that. Whenever I do bit a DJ-ing at a rock disco I always drop it in."

Justin isn't a fan of contemporary music. "In fact I reject it," he says firmly. "Having said that, I've done a bit of writing for contemporary artists, but it can be soul destroying." He wrote a song for *American Idol* winner/future Queen singer Adam Lambert's debut solo album, and one for Meat Loaf's *Hang Cool Teddy Bear*. Following that, he found himself being sent lists of artists looking for songs.

"What happens is that somebody gets a hit, like for example the Imagine Dragons band, and the next day you get an email saying: 'Can you write a song that sounds like that?' They're looking for stuff that sounds like what's in the chart last week, which is totally fucking pointless. So I just prefer to concentrate on writing really brilliant songs and trying to send them to people."

Who would you like to write for?

"Dave Gahan. When I was young I bought a Depeche Mode 'Songs Of Faith And Devotion' T-shirt and I basically lived in it. He's a great frontman – one of the best ever. I reckon his voice with some big riffs would be amazing."

"Now you're talking." Frankie finds something he might take home.

The Darkness smile (or not) for the camera.

Have you reached out to him?

"Recently I have. But I haven't heard back. He might read this and get in touch." He beams. "Make my dreams come true, *Classic Rock*."

We can't promise that, but we can promise to settle the bill today. There's definitely more than £50 worth of music laid out on the table in front of us as we convene in the Rough Trade East coffee bar. Dan agrees to sacrifice the Scott Walker CD and a copy of Lowell George's solo album *Thanks, I'll Eat It Here* that he's picked up. "But look at that cover," he says, indicating the latter's garish illustrated cover, which looks like it's been drawn by a 12-year-old on acid.

They're still 15 quid over, but we'll let them off. "Thank you," says Justin. "You're too kind."

If a person's life is reflected by their approach to record shopping, then The Darkness are nothing if not cavalier – something proven by the fact that they've spent the past few years making a documentary with filmmaker Simon Emmett, who hopped on board to record their triumphant comeback. Or, as with Justin and his Dread Zeppelin albums, that was the plan.

"We're still waiting for the happy ending," Justin says. "Or if not, the disastrous one. Either way we'll know it when it comes."

Pinewood Smile is released on October 6 via Cooking Vinyl Records.

CHEAP THRILLS

CHECKOUT

WITH £50 OF *CLASSIC ROCK*'S MONEY TO HAND OVER AT THE TILL, HERE'S HOW THE DARKNESS SPENT SOME OF IT.

Justin left without a Dread Zeppelin LP, and Dan had to put the Scott Walker CD he wanted back in the rack, but they each found something to brighten their day.

Justin Hawkins (VOCALS/GUITAR)

***Billy Green* – Stone: Original Soundtrack Recording**

"Basically, I don't know what it is. I just love the artwork because it's got a great big skull and some men on motorbikes on it. [Reads the info sticker] 'Untravelled electronic swamp rock… Biker cult classic… Ozploitation movie…' Ozploitation? What, like Australian exploitation? Oh, this is cool even if I don't know what the fuck it is."

Frankie Poullain (BASS)

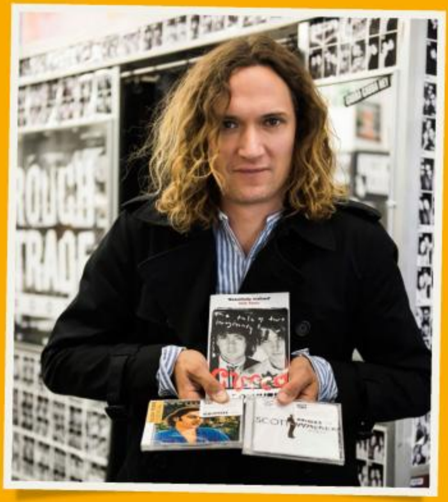
***Neil Young* – On The Beach**

"It's my favourite Neil Young album. There's a lot of blues stuff on it. I love it because it's less country, more blues. He's talking about how pissed off with the world he is. It's quite appropriate for now."

Rufus Taylor (DRUMS)

***T.Rex* – A Crown Of Dark Swandown**

"This was recorded at a rock festival in Cologne in 1970. I'm a big time T.Rex fan. [Inexplicable Caribbean accent] Me love it. But I don't have any albums of theirs on vinyl."



Dan Hawkins (GUITAR)

***Laurence Tolhurst* – Cured: The Tale Of Two Imaginary Boys**

"He was in The Cure in the eighties. I'm a big fan of that era of The Cure, and I love the story of how he was sacked. I watched an interview with him years ago and he was talking about Robert Smith. I have never seen a man more pissed off."

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P96

Black Sabbath

Their first eight albums, remastered, repackaged and still remarkable.

GETTY

Foo Fighters

Concrete And Gold RCA/ROSWELL

Dave Grohl and co. tackle our dark political age with the sounds of hard rock's golden age.

At the end of the sonic highway, David Eric Grohl found that the rock'n'roll spirit he's spent the whole decade chasing was an era, not a place. After the Foo Fighters recorded 2011's *Wasting Light* in his garage to invoke the ghost of his spotty punk teens, they set out across America making 2014's *Sonic Highways* in some of the most storied and historic studios in the country, hoping rock magic was to be found clogging up Nashville microphones or ingrained into the antique mixing desk dials of Chicago, Seattle or NYC. Rock'n'roll wasn't a tourist destination, it was the records that made you. It was *Sgt Pepper* and the White Album, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Paranoid*; it was *Led Zeppelin IV*, *Raw Power*, *Ace Of Spades* and *High Voltage*. It was, by and large, the dark and magical festering pot of 1967-73, and for the Foos' ninth album it would be here that Grohl and co.would mine sonic concrete and melodic gold.

Bizarrely bringing in Adele and Sia producer Greg Kurstin (of indie poppers The Bird And The Bee), the mission statement for *Concrete And Gold* was "where hard rock extremes and pop sensibilities collide [like] Motörhead's version of *Sgt Pepper*". The finished product is actually more like AC/DC having a crack at making their White Album, in that it's as varied, expansive and crammed with drug-crusted invention as a band embedded in blues and hard rock can get. For a record relatively light on pop-rock stadium slayers, it's also easily the Foos' most elemental album yet.

Its trick is to frack the grungier seam of that fervid age of hard rock invention, the records straddling the turn of the 70s that drove a pickaxe of drugs and feedback into the brain of flower power and sounded like they were made by men who'd worked out that the devil had all the best heroin. Some parts of *Concrete And Gold* are shameless in their late/post-Beatles tributism – *Sunday Rain* could be the cast of *Hair* covering a cynical Lennon tune like *I Found Out* or *Dig A Pony*, the gorgeous acoustic shuffle *Happy Ever After (Zero Hour)* is an homage to *Blackbird*, *I Will*, *Mother Nature's Son* and *Across The Universe* so reverential that it's even in mono for the first verse. And for one billion kudos points he gets Paul McCartney drumming on an as-yet-undisclosed track. Because, presumably, he can.

Elsewhere, *Concrete And Gold* plays somewhat sillier – and more manipulative – buggers with its source material. Opener *T-Shirt* finds Grohl mimicking a gentle 60s Motown singer for the first 30 seconds, before 1973 Aerosmith invade the booth and 'space harmonise' the tune into the power ballad ether. The inevitable Zeppelin riffs merge with the inevitable *Tommy* power chords to create *Make It Right*, and there are some quite brilliant 'what ifs' here. what if Alice Cooper had made *I Am The Walrus?* You get the surprisingly enjoyable *The Sky Is A Neighbourhood*, an epic of orchestral anger and ominous squealing. What if Black Sabbath had ditched *The Wizard* and gotten heavily into Wizzard? That'll be *La Dee Da*, a devil's boogie.

Sabbath wouldn't have needed to ditch the apocalyptic war stuff though; Grohl keeps an album so deeply rooted in the 60s/70s crossover fresh by inserting contemporary guests such as The Kills' Allison Mosshart and The Bird And Bee's Inara George (plus a secret appearance by "probably the biggest pop star in the world" – our money's on Paul Nuttall), and by theming the album around the "hope and desperation" of America's current political calamity. "You get what you deserve," he tells his fellow Americans on *T-Shirt*, even going on to sketch a typical Trump supporter driven into the arms of jingoism by hardship and fear on the pounding *Arrows*. Elsewhere the album traces Trump's trajectory to all sorts of terrifying potential conclusions, taking in environmental dangers (*The Sky Is A Neighbourhood*, *Dirty Water*), poverty (*Make It Right*) and rising international conflict (*La Dee Da*).

'An album so deeply rooted in the 60s/70s crossover.'

Grohl does emerge from the modern age with some glimmer of optimism and defiance, though. Come the title track finale – a sludge-rock go at Floyd's *Brain Damage/Eclipse* – he's declaring '*Our roots are stronger than you know/Up through the concrete we will grow*' over a great sky gig of gospel bombast that doesn't quite have the melodic sparkle to live up to its *Dark Side Of The Moon* ambitions but certainly ties up the most cohesive consume-in-one-sitting Foo Fighters album in a decade. If Dave Grohl is an enduring icon of rocking through the hard times, we need him – and *Concrete And Gold* – now more than ever.

Mark Beaumont

King King

Exile & Grace MANHATON

Crowning glory.

King King really do make this kind of thing sound so effortless. Having bagged yet more blues gongs over the past year or so, this fourth album and follow-up to 2015's *Reaching For The Light* finds the band on top form, the warmth and power of their sound given a welcome tougher, riffier edge by a muscular mix from Chris Sheldon (Foo Fighters, Feeder). *Tear It All Up* and *(She Don't) Gimme No Lovin'* are the main tracks benefitting from grittier guitars, but the entire album has a ballsier feel. *Heed The Warning* and *Long Time Running* in particular boast a wonderfully confident bluesy swagger, while *Broken* and *Find Your Way Home* do the whole soulful thing the band already carry off so well.

With not an ounce of songwriting fat on display, every song contributes to the overwhelming sense of a band enjoying a seriously creative purple patch. Long may it run.

Essi Berelian

Pere Ubu

20 Years In A Montana Silo CHERRY RED

More strange, twisted music from Cleveland's assault on blue-collar rock.

Album number 16 after a few hiatuses, and the first of The Dark Room, following on from the Orange Period. More of the dissimilar, one might say – singer (and mainstay) David Thomas howls, yelps and yowls across 12 tracks of stop-start analogue and digital guitar revisionism; the cluttering Krautrock rhythms of pioneers Neu! and so forth, set forth to a horror-show vision of radioactive disused factory lots and missile storage towers. Sometimes Thomas sounds deranged, angry like an aging Orson Welles railing futile at the clouds (*Toe To Toe*). On *The Healer* he sounds quietened, borderline beautiful as he bleats over distant clarinet and disharmony.

The Pere Ubu sound predated punk (but it's not proto- or prog), and from the feel of it it might well see us all into our graves. Thomas might have this new album down as the James Gang teaming up with Tangerine Dream, but PU exist in a world their own, one that bears only passing resemblance to reality.

Everett True

Quireboys

White Trash Blues YER ROCKA

Same ol' song and dance, my friends.

Holy shit, boys. There is no bigger cliche in rock'n'roll right now than aging glam-rockers suddenly discovering the blues, so this record is probably inevitable, but longtime fans expecting another roadhouse wallop like 2016's *Twisted Love* are in for a whole different experience altogether. Of course, the Quireboys were throwing in bluesy touches since the beginning – there were boogie-woogie piano rolls and Chuck Berry riffs ways back on their 1990 debut *A Bit Of What You Fancy* – but *White Trash Blues* takes their affection for the stuff all the way.

A collection of blues standards originally recorded by Muddy Waters, Slim Harpo, Rufus Thomas etc, you've heard them all before, oftentimes by Ratt. Quireboys frontman Spike was born to wail the blues and he's magnificent at it, but this stuff was pretty beat even when the Stones were mining it a lifetime ago. Essentially this is *Honkin' For Bobo* for the cool kids. (Shrugs.)

Sleazegrinder

Ten Years After

A Sting In The Tale FAST WESTERN

New material celebrating a half-century in the business.

The original Ten Years After, featuring the late Alvin Lee, formed in 1967 and made their mark at Woodstock in 1969. They racked up staggering sales in the 70s while staying below the radar of iconography, before splitting in 1974. After a series of revivals, founder members Chick Churchill and Ric Lee were moved to re-form the band following Lee's death in 2013, taking on board new members Chris Hodgkinson (bass) and Marcus Bonfanti (vocals, guitar).

This album is in no sense a departure from their old style – they owe us nothing new – and is a showcase for their long-matured blues, rock and jazz blend, with tracks like *Iron Horse*, *Up In Smoke* and the engagingly mournful *Stoned Alone* full of seasoned virtuosity.

David Stubbs

Prophets Of Rage

Prophets Of Rage *FANTASY/CAROLINE*

Rap-rock veterans strike back at the Trumpire.

Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian recently recalled a conversation from the early 90s where he had noted that the only way Rage Against The Machine could have become more exciting would have been – with no disrespect to the band's vocalist Zack de la Rocha – to install Public Enemy's Chuck D as their frontman.

More than two decades on, that whimsical notion became a thunderous reality, with the added bonus of Cypress Hill's inimitable B-Real as Chuck's co-rapper and an accommodating world providing guitarist Tom Morello and his new band with the most perfectly fucked-up political backdrop. Until mere weeks ago, Prophets Of Rage's gigs were dominated by covers of RATM, Public Enemy and Cypress Hill tunes, but new material was always a distinct possibility, and this 12-track eruption of socially enlightened fury is the end result.

Of course, it's almost impossible to avoid comparing Prophets Of Rage to Morello's former band, but differences are plentiful and definitive. The combination of Chuck D and B-Real's wholly different vocal deliveries is a revelation throughout: the former's commanding baritone and preacher's power contrasting beautifully with the latter's nasal sneer and street-smart menace. Similarly, the chemistry between Morello, drummer Brad Wilk and bassist Tim Commerford has never been in doubt, and here, while generally less aggressive than they were in their youthful pomp, that effortless ensemble groove ensures that none of these tracks will fail to free minds *and* asses.

The best are gleaming anthems for the Trump era; *Unfuck The World*, *Hail To The Chief*, *Hands Up* and *Who Owns Who* are all strident, Rage-style calls-to-arms, replete with those unmistakable Morello squeaks and scrapes emerging from a riot of Hendrix-via-Andy Gill riffing.

Meanwhile, the one-two punch of the strutting, Zep-ish *Take Me Higher* and the tense, chicken-cluck stomp of *Strength In Numbers* points to shrewd new shades on the expected sonic palette. Even the slightly daft *Legalize Me*, with lyrics that reek of B-Real's notorious weed worship, is sharper and more convincing than you may expect. Only the under-baked *Fired A Shot* and the closing *Smash It* fail to register with at least one fiery hook. And if nothing here hits the nail on the head with quite the same ferocity as Body Count's year-defining *No Lives Matter*, it matters not. However you slice it, it's a welcome and very timely thrill to hear Scott Ian's dream come true.

Dom Lawson

The Dream Syndicate

How Did I Find Myself Here? *ANTI-*

Paisley Underground heroes resurface.

The Dream Syndicate were once on a par with R.E.M. as revivers of 60s rock's dark and pretty essences in the hostile 80s. Their small, fervent cult stayed steady enough to encourage a live reunion in 2012 with rejigged personnel, and now this first album since 1988.

Band leader Steve Wynn is a fine solo songwriter. *80 West* is nasty LA noir with a body surely in the boot, haunted by Mickey Spillane's *Kiss Me Deadly* and *Mulholland Drive;* in contrast, *Like Mary* is a quiet vignette of breaking lives, mourning a woman who wants to get lost. This band, though, offer something he can't find elsewhere. You can hear it in the creepy, lovelorn surrealism of *Filter Me Through You*'s hazy dream-pop. Then the eleven-minute title track, with its ruefully fated protagonist, spidery keyboards, jaggedly interlocked parts and mantric end, proves decisively that this Dream isn't over.

Nick Hasted

The Bronx

V *COOKING VINYL/ATO*

Punk, rock and a whole lot more besides.

The fifth in a series of self-titled albums and their first in four years finds LA punks The Bronx in a curious position. While their reputation was crafted around the blind fury of the chaos they created both on record and on stage, 2013's *IV* eschewed their signature ferocity in favour of a more considered version of punk rock. These punks had grown up, and their fans weren't entirely happy about it.

But it's disingenuous to claim that The Bronx have lost any of their potency on this record. Those who were disappointed with *IV* will find similar gripes with *V*, but in harnessing their fury the band's ability to craft a brilliant pop song has surfaced. While the frenzied punk rock of lead-off single *Sore Throat* finds them as urgent and direct as they've ever been, *V* is the sound of a band acknowledging that there's more to their sound than that. It swings between buoyant hardcore punk, heritage-heavy hard rock and snotty, brattish proto-punk, all polished to a modern sheen.

It's not all hit – there's the borderline derivative glam-metal of *Two Birds*, and the wholly less arresting pop-punk of *Side Effects* – but this is loud, proficient punk rock which should leave even the most curmudgeonly listener fist-punching with glee.

Briony Edwards

Ringo Starr

Give More Love *UMC*

Another all-Starr affair.

Ringo – he was in The Beatles, y'know – intended this to be a country album, but he changed his mind and got into full-blown rock mode. Well, almost. And the results are pretty good.

He kicks off with a statement of intent, *We're On The Road Again*, and sounds energised having Paul McCartney by his side, while guitarist Steve Lukather turns in a performance that would certainly wake up the old folks' home. Macca returns for the nostalgic *Show Me The Way*, which is a bit gloopy, but Ringo doesn't sound like he's phoned-in the sincerity.

Famous names abound: Peter Frampton and his talkbox, Benmont Tench, Dave Stewart – that level of dude. Inevitably they're not reinventing the wheel, yet it's still good to hear Ringo's non-voice (heavily treated), and his drumming skills are undiminished. *Back Off Boogaloo* and *Photograph* get reasonable makeovers without troubling the originals, but there are surprises; *You Can't Fight Lightning* is played by Alberta Cross and they provide the album's best moment.

Max Bell

Triggerfinger

Colossus *MASCOT*

Best yet from the Belgians.

The problem with the previous four Triggerfinger albums is that they tried but failed to capture their essential live energy. This time, though, they've gone for a different approach. It feels like a studio record, rather than a collection of songs played live in a studio confine. And it works.

The Belgian trio's off-kilter, perverse representation of rock'n'roll shines through, and nowhere better than on instrumental closer *Wollensak Walk*. But, thanks to producer Mitchell Froom, what is right to the fore is the band's ability to write thoughtful, moody songs

which sound like Stray Cats channelling The Cult, as Danko Jones strums in a corner.

From the country bounce of the title track, through the slow smooching *Afterglow* and the Faces-inspired strut of *Bring Me Back A Live One*, Triggerfinger are having fun, and in the process have succeeded in the challenge to deliver a convincing set of studio performances.

Malcolm Dome

Koyo

Koyo 88 WATT

Prog and shoegaze collide on the Leeds band's thrilling debut.

With influences ranging from Led Zep and Alice In Chains to Radiohead and even Paul Simon, this promising band deliver a big, dramatic, psych-soaked sound with a texture that owes much to My Bloody Valentine, and even *A Northern Soul*-era Verve.

This, their debut album, was recorded at the studio of former Hawkwind member Dave Anderson, and there's a fittingly cosmic sweep to Koyo's melodic anthems (*Strange Bird In The Sky*, *Jettisoned*), plus a dash of Pink Floyd's experimentalism (sprawling single *Tetrachromat* is tempered with a very Dick Parry sax solo). Elsewhere you might hear the avant-rock of the Mars Volta, even Mansun, and Koyo can do 80s-inflected funk-pop too (*Lost In The Kingdom*). Jacob Price's well-judged keyboards and programming add a 21st-century sheen, and guitarist/vocalist Huw Edwards is an appealing presence, hitting the sweet spot between rawk heft (*Release*) and indie vulnerability (*Jouska* is just gorgeous).

Overall it's a tantalising calling card, and the word is they're killer live too.

Grant Moon

Devilfire

Dark Manoeuvres SELF RELEASED

Classic rock gets a modern makeover.

Years in the planning by producer, songwriter and lead vocalist Alex Cooper, but only forming as a band in 2016, Devilfire finally coalesced as a tight unit while recently supporting former Nightwish vocalist Tarja Turunen.

The level of studio experience is apparent immediately across these 13 tracks: the easy swing of *Tear Me Apart*, James Bond stylings of *She's Always On The Run* and love-is-pain epic *Ready For War?* sound like a band that has been round the block a few times already. The quality is undeniable. And with co-producer Romesh Dodangoda (Bring Me The Horizon, Funeral For a Friend) mixing, the result is loud and modern, every tune crammed with vocal harmonies, backing synths and layered guitars.

A formidable first album.

Essi Berelian

Threshold

Legends Of The Shires

NUCLEAR BLAST

Brit prog stalwarts hit the post-reshuffle jackpot.

Seemingly against the odds, parting ways with long-time vocalist Damian Wilson has done Threshold the world of good. Reunited with former singer Glynn Morgan, who was with them briefly in the mid-90s, they sound collectively revitalised and exhilarated on this, their eleventh studio album.

An 83-minute, two-disc conceptual splurge with feint undertones of post-Brexit melancholy, it joyously restores the balls-out prog opulence that was lacking on 2014's *For The Journey*. But the key to this album's efficacy lies in the quality of the melodies, all delivered with extraordinary clarity and soul by Morgan. From brutish riffing and futuristic AOR sheen on *Small Dark Lines* and the surging, explosive *Trust The Process* to wildly catchy turbo-balladry of *State Of Independence* and audacious extravagance on climactic epic *Lost In Translation*, this is the finest set of songs the band have ever written and a genuine milestone for the modern prog-metal scene.

Dom Lawson

Dhani Harrison

In///Parallel BMG

Beatle offspring finds his own space.

'*It's not like it used to be*,' Dhani Harrison chants on the lively *All About Waiting*, and he deserves credit for creating fresh, contemporary soundscapes in which to pitch his fizzing, twitchy songs. This gets around the 'problem' that his voice is identical to his dad's.

As a recording artist Dhani Harrison has refrained from using the name before, and after two albums with thenewno2 and film scores, *In///Parallel* counts as his solo debut. It's hugely impressive, too, combining inherited Zen yearning with busy, intelligent arrangements, touching on prog-pop.

Fuzzy sitars and guitars make way for glitching electronica and strings; he adopts call-and-response to display multiple vocal tones. Significantly, every song has ideas to burn, from the trippy-hippie *Never Know* to the sandy, shadowy *London Water*.

With a dash of peacenik politics the heritage is clear, but Dhani does more than enough to establish his own terrain.

Chris Roberts

El Goodo

By Order Of The Moose

STRANGETOWN

Welsh psych-pop.

Like fellow Welsh bands Super Furry Animals and Gorky's Zygotic Myncihere, El Goodo (named after a Big Star track) have a penchant for psychedelic pop. This, their third album and first for eight years, is released on SFA keyboard player Cian Ciaran's imprint, but it's more retro than the Super Furrys. Shamelessly so. It was recorded (in an old derelict cinema in their home village of Resolven) on a 16-track machine with a small array of faulty equipment, their neat pastiches of garage rock'n'roll and girl-group pop embellished with strings, brass, sitars, xylophones and harmonicas, all the better to achieve that period sound.

The results are rarely less than swirlingly lovely, suffused with incense and peppermints. *I Sit And Wonder* and *It Makes Me Wonder* (they're big on 'Wonder') could be covers of period hits, the latter featuring saucepans being hit to the beat of The Ronettes' *Be My Baby*, and Byrds harmonies. It's not all pretty – *Sail The Ocean* is like a rumble between Johnny Kidd and the Beach Boys – but it is all good.

Paul Lester

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Neon Animal: sleazy, slinky 70s glitter and 80s glam.

Neon Animal

Bring Back Rock N' Roll From The Dead SELF-RELEASED

NEONANIMAL.BANDCAMP.COM

London band Neon Animal envision a world where we're all young and skinny forever and Marc Bolan's hair is still a mass of glammy curls and Guns N' Roses are still eating hot dogs in a storage space and everybody wears pink fur coats and dreams about lost weekends with Brian Eno and Ziggy Stardust and the only way to hear the true voice of God is to listen to the Top 20 countdown on the radio. Will we get there? No. Does this album sound like we could? Yes it fucking does, man.

This is sleazy, slinky 70s glitter and 80s glam scrubbed clean with digital zap and flash, and while it's not exactly reinventing any wheels, it does make 'em spin and hum majestically. Every song features a big gooey chorus and rampant guitar heroism, but the pick to click for sheer audacity is the brilliantly titled opener *I'm Killing Myself & Everyone Is Helping Me.*

Electric Street Queens

Queen Sized SELF-RELEASED HTTPS://ELECTRICSTREETQUEENS.BANDCAMP.COM/

This is the dirtiest, dingiest, sexiest bucket of sweat you'll hear all year. Powered by lead screamer Coco Roy, a ball of raging hormones and punk ferocity, this album is the kind of crazy, throbbing wet dream you'd have after falling into a Quaalude haze with a pile of *Creem* magazines from 1978.

Rude Dude And The Creek Freaks

Acid Bath SELF-RELEASED

RUDEDUDEANDTHECREEKFREAKS.BANDCAMP.COM

I heard this story once about a kid who bought a monkey, and when he got it got to his house and he let out of the cage it went berserk and peeled most of the skin right off his arm. Then it bit his face and jumped out the window. This record sounds just like that monkey.

Hellbros

Calling All Giants SELF-RELEASED

HELLBROS.BANDCAMP.COM

I mean, I'm with you; their name sounds like a prison gang that really digs Pantera. But dodgy moniker notwithstanding, these Canadian sleaze-beasts deliver the goods in big, meaty fistfuls. *Calling All Giants* is full of gasoline-chugging biker metal that is so aggressive and over-the-top you'll be checking your abdomen for stab wounds before it's over.

Meatbeaters

Wrong Side Of Yesterday

SELF-RELEASED MEATBEATERS.BANDCAMP.COM

If you think we've moved on from the days when a rock band could mine dick jokes for an album's worth of material, then welcome to Adelaide, buster.

Aussie Motorheadbangers Meatbeaters serve up nearly a dozen face-melting odes to their own sexual prowess. And it's fucking awesome.

The Darkness

Pinewood Smile *COOKING VINYL*

Clown princes of self-spoofing glam continue their bumpy comeback.

In their multi-platinum pomp early last decade, The Darkness offered an irresistible mix of arena-sized anthems, smutty humour and bollock-busting live spectacle. Now three albums into their post-rehab, post-reunion chapter, their lovingly crafted semi-parody songs remain instant mood-lifters, but knob gags are sparser and budgets clearly tighter.

Having recently toured with Guns N' Roses, the band's classic rock credentials are stronger than ever, especially as *Pinewood Smile* was recorded with new drummer Rufus Tiger Taylor, son of Roger, and producer Adrian Bushy, a double Grammy-winner for his work with Foo Fighters and Muse. And yet the songcraft feels a little bumpy, closer to the underwhelming mixed bag of their 2012 comeback *Hot Cakes* than to the glorious operatic bombast of its 2015 sequel *Last of Our Kind*.

Marrying Mötley Crüe-level innuendo with sardonic comment on fickle pop fame, *All The Pretty Girls* is weapons-grade party-metal pastiche: *'Plenty of action, massive attraction, when you're selling out stadiums,'* quips Justin Hawkins, the Russell Brand of rock. But many of the best songs here are the least typical, particularly those that combine lowbrow wit with an edge of anger *Solid Gold* is a case in point, it's AC/DC sized hip-thrusting riff married to a scalding confessional lyric about the cocaine-fuelled cynicism of the music business. *"We're never gonna stop… shitting out solid gold!"* Hawkins shrieks in full ear-bursting castrato.

Another left-field killer track is *Southern Trains*, a rare detour into snarly punkmetal with a lyric that lambasts the widely-loathed, strife-torn rail franchise that links London to the English south coast. *'It's a journey into pure despair/There are fucking arseholes everywhere!'* Hawkins trills winningly. A handful of straight-faced power ballads also stand out. *Why Don't The Beautiful Cry* is a classy windswept weepie while *Lay Me Down, Barbara* must surely be the most Morrissey-esque title Hawkins has ever crooned, a seduction song that subverts but also celebrates naff romantic clichés.

Alas, quality levels dip markedly in the album's latter stages, where anodyne filler meets random scatological humour. The closing number *Stampede of Love* is a finger-picking, country-rock heart-twanger based around a series of jokes mocking a fat friend: *'I saw you at the beach today/You looked quite thin but you were just far away.'* This is feeble stuff, more Benny Hill than Russell Brand. When they hit the target, The Darkness are untouchable, but too much of *Pinewood Smile* feels like a half-hearted wank when it should have been a mighty ear-shafting.

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Stephen Dalton

Lunatic Soul

Fractured *KSCOPE*

Riverside man's fifth solo album most personal and musical yet.

Created around what Mariusz Duda (to all intents and purposes, he is Lunatic Soul) describes as "a personal tragedy" in 2016, *Fractured* is, in part, a spacey, almost trip-hop like elegy to Riverside's former guitarist Piotr Grudzinski who died suddenly in February last year.

Like all the best records, it's also shot through with heartbreak and regret, though Duda has, quite brilliantly in places, managed to combine sublime acoustic guitars, orchestration and lazy looping beats that puts you in mind of the Bristol Sound from the early 1990s, think Massive Attack and Portishead. Don't all run away shrieking though; there are moments of spooky, prog ambience that sounds like David Sylvian fronting Karnivool. Especially good is the head turning *A Thousand Shards Of Heaven*, a slow burner that wouldn't sound of place on a Kings Of Convenience album, which then quietly reveals itself to be a mesh of strings, dance beats and histrionic saxophone and at over 12 minutes doesn't sound a second too long. Duda's clearly endured, making real art out of his adversity.

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Philip Wilding

Ufomammut

8 *NEUROT*

Continental doom warriors crank up the crazy.

Dedicated admirers of Ufomammut's career to date are unlikely to be steeling themselves for a radical change of tack on the band's aptly titled eighth album. Purveyors of a bruising but acutely psychedelic strain of pummelling, bowel-rattling doom metal, the Italian trio have consistently come closer than most to emulating the inexorable grind of tectonic plates as we spin pointlessly in an unknowable universe. These are, it hardly needs saying, the kind of things that enter one's mind after the umpteenth bong hit of the night, and it's difficult to imagine a more apposite soundtrack than the thrillingly queasy *Psyrcle*: eight minutes of churning, wildly distorted repetition punctuated with brief bursts of meditative restraint and slightly longer bursts of feral cacophony.

Despite their dogged commitment to the art of caving people's heads in with massive riffs, Ufomammut are an ingenious bunch, and this is one of their most absorbing strides toward oblivion yet.

■■■■■■■■□□

Dom Lawson

Twisted Illusion

Insight To The Mind Of A Million Faces *SELF-RELEASED*

A double album that tells us subtlety is for wimps.

Love Queen? Rush? Dio? How about if you crammed them all together into one big, fleshy prog-rock meatloaf, seasoned with a lack of restraint that makes Devin Townshend look like John Denver? If that sounds palatable, then Twisted Illusion could be right up your street.

It's all the vision of frontman Matt Jones (the rest of the line-up is an ever-shifting enigma), who wails with wild abandon over sprawling prog epics that, in the case of the title track, spill over the 28-minute mark. You can't knock the guy's ambition, but there are moments, such as at the end of *World's Apart*, when it genuinely sounds like four different songs are playing at once – a little self editing could have worked wonders. And of *course* it's a double album, in fitting with the rest of the 'go big or go home' mentality. And yet, despite the sometimes suffocating deluge of ideas, there's something eccentrically loveable about the sheer audacity of it all.

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Emma Johnston

Dan Reed

Confessions *ZERO ENTERTAINMENT*

Intimate songs with a positive message.

This is not a concept album, but the 10 songs here are connected by Dan Reed's spiritual positivity, as he tells us that even when we are left broken by the pursuit of love, we should never abandon the dream.

This might seem hopelessly naive, but on his fourth solo album, he makes it all work. Because the flair and depth of

SIMON EMMETT

his musical passion overcomes any cynicism. The music has a gentle flow and glorious delight in life. The pace is sedate, almost folksy, but it leaves an indelible impression. Reed's vocal method of telling a story through minimal modulation lifts songs like *Smile*, *Distant Star* and *Cave In*, making them feel both fresh yet also as if you've heard them a thousand times before.

Reed mixes acoustic nuances with funk flexes, and in doing so has created a richly rewarding yet understated album. He oozes a supple class.

Malcolm Dome

Dirty Thrills

Heavy Living FRONTIERS

London blues rockers' debut album sounds familiar.

Dirty Thrills have a rotten name and a terrific sound. Rather than the fifth-rate 80s cock rock their handle suggests, the youthful London four-piece offer taut, coiled modern blues rock that deftly stradles 1967 and 2017 in the same way as Rival Sons. In *exactly* the same way.

That's Dirty Thrills' biggest problem. *Heavy Living* is a long, long way from being a bad album but there's no glossing over their resemblance to Jay Buchanan and co – themselves an act who have been known to the cop the odd move from the giants of the 60s and 70s. It's there in the electric grooves of *Law Man* and *The Brave*, and it's definitely there in singer Louis James's soaring and tumbling vocals. It's doubly frustrating because you sense there's a truly fantastic band in there bursting to get out – one who aren't called Rival Sons.

Dave Everley

Brant Bjork

Europe '16 NAPALM

A live primer for novices, and a reaffirmation for the faithful.

Much like the effects of the marijuana leaf that adorns the cover of this live album, time becomes a relatively meaningless concept in the world of former Kyuss and Fu Manchu drummer, and multi-instrumentalist Brant Bjork. So while the album title tells us the music was recorded in 2016, the overall vibe is rooted deep in '72.

In keeping with the weed-fuelled vibes of those far off days, this live album sees Bjork and his band stretch out those de-tuned and tar pit-thick riffs into extended and exploratory wig outs. So it is that *Low End Punk* becomes a head-nodding 10-minute groove while *Lazy Bones-Automatic Fantastic* floats away on multi-coloured psychedelic waters. Elsewhere, *Buddha Time* lurches forward, its guitars dragged through parched desert dust.

Alas, the album suffers from too many fade-outs, thus making it feel more like a 'Best Of' but these are still effective hits from the bong.

Julian Marszalek

Josh Todd & The Conflict

Year Of The Tiger

CENTURY MEDIA

Buckcherry singer flexes his modern rock muscles.

Like a branch of The Sealed Knot Society with tattoos and leather pants, Buckcherry have done a fine job of keeping the Sunset Strip spirit alive long after the lights went out on that hallowed scene. But even modern day cock rock stars feel need to bust out of their cage occasionally.

Year Of The Tiger is BC frontman Josh Todd's attempt to reposition himself as a 21st-century rock'n'roller. It's less in hock to the recent-ish past than his main band, though bellowed punk rock-style gang choruses and the veneer of electronic modernity aside there's nothing here to scare the horses.

Todd himself doesn't have the most charismatic voice around – there's a reason he spent the late 80s and early 90s toiling in the glam metal foothills – but he undeniably knows his way around a tune. Album highlight *Story Of My Life* shows a surprising maturity, while the brilliantly OTT *Erotic City* ('*Fuck so pretty you and me*') ploughs the same old crazy-bitches-on-cocaine furrow. You can take the boy out of Hollywood, but you can't take Hollywood out of the boy.

Dave Everley

Cradle Of Filth

Cryptoriana – The Seductiveness Of Decay

NUCLEAR BLAST

Suffolk horrors carry on screaming on twelfth album.

Cradle Of Filth are one of the great British heavy metal bands. From their beginnings in the dank depths of the early 1990s as vampire-fixated black metal hobgoblins, they've blossomed – if that's the right word –into the Hammer Horror Iron Maiden.

Cryptoriana is a cinematic epic draped in shades of black and blood red, heavy on the orchestration and gothic camp. The nails-down-a-blackboard extremity of the past is still there but it's a long way from front and centre, while frontman Dani Filth has dialled down his Nazgul shriek in favour of a cracked croon. There's little ground they haven't covered before, whether that's the old school Steve Harris gallop of *The Seductiveness Of Decay* or the choral interlude of *Achingly Beautiful*, but no one does it quite like them.

Dave Everley

Caligula's Horse

In Contact INSIDE OUT

Prog-metal blizzard from Oz.

Australian progressive metal band Caligula's Horse enjoy a gallop. *Dream The Dead* thunders in at a rapid pace, demolishing all in its path. Yet when this concept album "in four chapters" remembers to breathe, the Brisbane bruisers reveal other strings to their bow. Melody, mid-tempo rhythms and even a rather lovely choral section sneak in, suggesting the band could appeal beyond their fan base if they were a little braver.

Their fourth album is unafraid to explore themes of art and creativity. In calmer moments there are subtleties which recall Opeth or Anathema, notably within the 15-minute eclectic epic that is *Graves*. More often, they're raging around like a psychotic Emperor. Rein it in and new empires will rise.

Chris Roberts

ROUND-UP: PROG

By Jo Kendall

White Moth Black Butterfly: but which is which?

White Moth Black Butterfly

Atone KSCOPE

Although delighted to front leading djenters TesseracT, for some years now, Dan Tompkins has eschewed being just a shouty frontman, hunting for likeminded souls – such as New Dehli proggers Skyharbor – to help him carve (another) slightly different niche.

Following 2014's well-received debut *One Thousand Wings*, Tompkins and Skyharbor collaborator Keshav Dhar have found the perfect new home for their majestic, cinematic explorations – Kscope. Amid Anathema, Pineapple Thief and Blackfield, *Atone*'s themes of loss and hope are beautifully rendered and WMBB's take on Sigur Rós, Mew and Tool fits right in.

Joined by Devin Townsend string arranger/producer Randy Slaugh and East Midlands singer-songwriter Jordan Turner, textural bridges link Tompkins and Turner's tender duets *Rising Sun* and *The Serpent* as a deep, Asiatic undergroove leads out from the sounds of war, peace and everything in-between.

Smart, elegant and, importantly, youthful stuff.

Magic Bus

Phillip The Egg

BACK TO THE GARDEN

Pot-headed Totnes pixies Magic Bus tip macramé caps to Canterbury heroes. Kevin Ayers vocals overlay breezy, jumbo-cord grooves, hitting Ozrics jams and Gong wrinkles. Ex-Kula Shaker keyboardist Jay Darlington keeps *Kepler 22*'s jazz-fusion knotty, as flautist Goodwin-Darke conjures some mellifluous melodies for the unashamedly hippie melting pot.

Lifesigns

Cardington WWW.LIFESIGNS.ME

Inspired by the "history and mystery" of RAF Cardington, Lifesigns' second album is glorious AOR-fluffed neo. John Young's Asia/Bonnie Tyler pedigree makes for tasteful turns on vox and synths, former Cutting Crew drummer Frosty Beedle contributes consummate polyrhythmic showmanship. Top tunes from the plaintive *Different* to the title track, a wistfulness always just beneath the surface.

Enslaved

E NUCLEAR BLAST

Enslaved go rave! Not really. But 2006's fractal backdrops might return when they tour these dreamy shoegaze, pommelling Viking metal and masterful Mastodonish curlicues. New vocalist Håkon Vinje brings a cosmic Killing Joke vibe but *E*'s aces are the primordial, Wardruna-enhanced *Feathers Of Eolh* and roaring *Hiindsiights*, featuring the avant-sax of Kjetil Møster. New shoots, esoteric routes.

Buttonhead

Never Or Forget HORSE ARM

If you missed 2012's exuberant *3D Opera Whale*, head to Bandcamp to prep for the newbies from these art-math-pronksters. Cardiacs are your starting point in a mad world of rogue woodwinds, strings, cyclonic drums and falsetto vocals. *Coombe Dean* might offer supine respite but *Robocop Sunset* and *Invisible Children* are the musical tartrazine to get you up and at the throat of the day.

Black Country Communion

BCCIV *MASCOT*

Fourth album from supergroup combines hard riffing and pensive lyrics.

Featuring the combined weave of keyboard player Derek Sherinian, guitarist/vocalist Joe Bonamassa, drummer Jason Bonham and former Deep Purple and Black Sabbath bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes (aka the Voice Of Rock), Anglo-American, LA-based Black Country Communion boast quite some pedigree.

BCCIV thrives on the contrasting creativity of the seasoned, soulful, 60-something Hughes and the pyrotechnic, Pageian riffery of co-songwriter Bonamassa, at 40 very much the baby of the group. The album was written in four months, and it feels like it's still fresh from the oven, crackling with hooks and heft. This is no more evident than on opener and statement of intent *Collide*, which tumbles down the stairs in a manner that reminds of Led Zeppelin's *Black Dog*. *Over My Head* is a more straight-ahead, hit-the-road affair, propelled by Morse-code-style fretboard fumes. It's matched by the funk-tinged energy of *The Crow* and *Awake*. Bonamassa takes over on vocals for *The Last Song For My Resting Place*, its wistful fiddles and mandolins helping to tell the story of the violinist and band leader on the Titanic who perished while still playing, a shining example of an olde-worlde code of selflessness, then it's back to business with *Sway*, a rat-a-tat funk attack with Bonamassa putting in some heavy excavation work in the mid-section.

The Cove represents another shift of mood. Hughes is a member of the Dolphin Project, set up to try to defend this endangered species from mass slaughter, particularly in Japan. It's clearly a cause extremely close to his heart, and Bonamassa rises to the occasion with turquoise, aqueous atmospherics which elevate to match Hughes's lyrical swell of anger and rage. Hughes also pays tribute to his departed parents on *Love Remains*, although its sentiments are a touch belied by the song's somewhat pneumatic riff. *Wanderlust* is a further, lovely shift of gear, lifted by Sherinian's grand piano, a touch of mobility and lightness in contrast to the heavy duty carried out elsewhere.

Finally there's *When The Morning Comes*, which rolls like mists down a hill, in keeping with the song's lyrical theme of returning home and the security of the 'brotherhood' of the four members of Black Country Communion. Certainly, in the often fractious world of heavy rock there's a sense of chemistry and camaraderie in BCC which will ensure that they can carry on down the line for some time yet.

David Stubbs

Lords Of Altamont

Wild Sounds Of The Lords Of Altamont *HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS*

It still ain't the Summer of Love.

Although LA's long-running motor-rockers Lords Of Altamont very clearly mine the Nixon era for their sonic palette (it's right there in the name), *Wild Sounds Of The Lords Of Altamont* is no retro-throwback stoner-rock navel-gaze bullshit. This thing is alive and electric, snarly and explosive, a wall of fuzz and venom and bone splinters that's sorta like Electric Wizard playing Thee Hypnotics' version of an alternative soundtrack to *Satan's Sadists* by the Blues Magoos. You know what I mean? It has always been here before, in other words.

There's a long and rich history of motorcycle-driven rock'n'roll, and the Lords are hip to all of it. This album, their sixth full-lengther, is rife with devastating uppercuts like the rip-snorting *Been Broken*, organ-heavy howler *It Ain't Revolution* and the positively Zodiac Mindwarp-esque biker-scuzz chugfest *Death On The Highway*. There are no ballads, no concessions, no mercy for the weak of flesh or constitution, but there are a couple of potential radio hits (*Going Downtown*, *Can't Lose*), if radio somehow miraculously comes back.

This is really how teenage dirtbags in 1969 wished Steppenwolf sounded. Now we get to be those dirtbags. What a goddamn age of miracles we live in.

Sleazegrinder

Black Stone Cherry

Black To Blues *MASCOT*

Southern rockers bow to the blues.

Recorded quickly in the same studio as their 2016 epic *Kentucky*, this EP of covers of blues classics doesn't upset any apple carts. The heavy, clipped beat and fuzz and rumble of guitars on Willie Dixon's *Built For Comfort* show the band applying their style to the blues pretty straight. Howlin' Wolf's *Champagne And Reefer* becomes a timeless pro-dope plea, although Chris Robertson's voice inevitably sounds flimsy compared to the Wolf's razor-gargling growl. *Palace Of The King*, written in 1971 by Stax Records mainstays Don Nix and Donald 'Duck' Dunn with Leon Russell, has a sly hippie strut to its lyrics which suits Robertson better (*'I've pleased the Queen, she really dug my style/Queens don't know a thing'*). Brass and female gospel-soul vocals also see these southern rockers sneak agreeably towards southern soul.

This is an inessential, post-*Kentucky* palate-cleanser, but still the band's good time – and some master songwriting – gets through.

Nick Hasted

Gun

Favourite Pleasures

CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

Veteran rockers get their melodic groove on.

Ever since they reunited nearly a decade ago, Gun have been threatening to break out with an album packed with hits from stem to stern. Well, now they've done it.

Their latest, *Favourite Pleasures*, is the kind of record that makes you *smile* and lose the plot. It has the effortless enthusiasm of kids appreciating the power of music for the first time, combined with the experience of musicians who know – just *know* – how to write a song that comes from the soul.

Everywhere you look on this album you're smacked by a seriously strong track. *She Knows* dives straight in with a smoothly pop-rock groove, while the title track nestles into a Zeppelin-style funk motif, and *Take Me Down* has action-packed simplicity.

Dante Gizzi has a vocal style full of character, while Jools Gizzi and Tommy Gentry are at turns gentle then snarling on guitar. There are bouncy anthems (*Silent Lovers*), dark moods (*Tragic Heroes*) and a surprise cover of the Beastie Boys' *(You've Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Party)*.

Here's a dare: play this album and remain unmoved.

Malcolm Dome

36 Crazyfists

Lanterns *SPINEFARM*

Baked Alaska.

Taking their name from a Jackie Chan film, 36 Crazyfists formed in Anchorage, Alaska in 1994 and always led by singer Brock Lindow and guitarist Steve Holt, are now up to their eighth album. They released the new album's advance single *Death Eater* to

establish the album's theme of finding calm in chaos and light in a rock-bottom tunnel.

Songs like *Below The Graves* and *Sleepsick* are complex affairs, one moment grabbing the todger of the nearest warthog to swing through bearded riffs, the next unfurling behemoth tattoos of rock-locked doom. Tracks like *Laying Hands* evoke *Another Perfect Day*-era Motörhead in the charging rhythms and flying guitars. Such dark onslaughts are alleviated by the acoustic-flavoured reflections of *Dark Corners* and *Sea And Smoke*, Lindow's glam-contrived vocals sent from his beleaguered soul with suitable drama. All consolidate an earnest honesty and chops that can carry 36 Crazyfists to battering the world stage.

Kris Needs

Paradise Lost

Medusa NUCLEAR BLAST

Upliftingly depressing metal.

Paradise Lost have never fitted neatly into any category, instead they've raged across death metal, doom and goth. So don't expect *Medusa* to be a satisfyingly comfortable album with which to engage. But that's what makes it so enticing.

The band allow the weight and heaviness of the music to nestle up against Nick Holmes's morbidly atmospheric vocals. Moreover, the gloominess of the instrumentation is offset by the way in which everything glides along on heavy groove rails.

It's a sumptuously desperate album, with the band ferociously attacking human greed on *Until The Grave*, a polemic wrapped in thunder, and laying bare the illogic of blind religious faith on both the moribund *No Passage For The Dead* and the lonely desperation of *Gods Of Ancient*.

Opener *Fearless Sky* sets the parameters, with its sludgy tone and crumbling grandeur, and the album retains this high standard throughout.

Darkness to lighten the mood.

Malcolm Dome

Overend Watts

He's Real Gone ANGEL AIR

Late Mott legend laughs it up.

Mott The Hoople bassist Overend Watts died in January, but he mocks mortality with a high-spirited posthumous album full of upbeat tunes and silly jokes. He even insisted that its name be changed from *She's Real Gone* to *He's Real Gone*. Determined to have a good time, he writes and plays almost everything himself, singing in a voice that welds Ray Davies, Syd Barrett and John Otway and penning rhymes that lead you to believe he's about to say a filthy word, which he then swerves like a guitar-slinging Benny Hill.

'Overend's just a rock'n'roll star', Ian Hunter sang in *Ballad Of Mott The Hoople*, and there's no arguing with that lore as he rips through cheeky riffs and rhythms. By the time he's chanting *'Prawn fire!'* repeatedly, you're won over by the surrealism and resilient humour. His original demo of Mott's *Born Late '58* is a bittersweet bonus.

Chris Roberts

Hiss Golden Messenger

Hallelujah Anyhow MERGE

Sturdily soulful Americana.

Hiss Golden Messenger are basically M.C. Taylor and assorted friends. This native Californian has become a leading Americana voice in the last decade, alchemising his love for The Byrds, The Beatles, Dylan, Van Morrison and Neil Young. The style he's arrived at almost makes burning effigies of this past, rising out of its ashes with singed, heady conviction. Musically, though, he can't fly free of his debts.

The smooth saxophone and inarticulate scat vocal in *John The Gun* nods explicitly to Van. So, probably, does *Domino (Time Will Tell)*, a song of upbeat, immaterial ecstasy.

His words and sentiments are left deliberately smudged and indefinite in places; sardonic Dylan phrasing sticks to some words, double-tracked Lennon wails on others. *Lost In The Darkness*, with its foot-stomp beat and urgent harmonica, sits on the splice between faith and doubt, a favourite Taylor spot. His fragile honesty lights a well-worn path.

Nick Hasted

Filthy Friends

Invitation KILL ROCK STARS

Sterling debut from American alt.rock supergroup.

What began as an informal live entity in 2012 has finally grown into something more substantial for Portland-based Filthy Friends. Led by Sleater-Kinney's Corin Tucker and ex-R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck, the ensemble – which also includes King Crimson drummer Bill Rieflin, guitarist Kurt Bloch and the Young Fresh Fellows/Minus 5 stalwart Scott McCaughey on bass – have made good on the promise of last year's fiery anti-Trump rant *Despierta*. That song is included here, alongside a batch of truculent tunes that sometimes feel like Patti Smith locking horns with The Replacements. Or, in the case of the terse staccato riffs of *Windmill*, Television.

Predictably, there are strong shades of Buck's old band too, not least amid the arpeggios of *Any Kind Of Crowd* (an R.E.M. track in all but Stipe). Elsewhere the greasy chug of *Come Back Shelley* carries fuzz-filled echoes of T.Rex in their prime.

Rob Hughes

Carousel Vertigo

Revenge Of Rock And Roll

MOLANO MUSIC

The spirit of the 70s lives on.

Album number two, and Carousel Vertigo's classic rock mission continues with 10 tracks that expand on their 2013 debut album *Mighty*.

It's taken them a while, but with a bit of Humble Pie here, a smidgeon of Deep Purple there and more than a pinch of vintage Whitesnake, this is an eclectic grab-bag of rock'n' roll that flaunts its 70s influences proudly but ultimately manages to forge its own identity. Stand-outs include the title track with its Stax-style horn section, the Whitesnake and Bad Company-flavoured *No More Hesitatin'* and the mean-assed riffing of *Get It On* which owes more to *Rocks*-era Aerosmith than to T. Rex.

For aficionados of hirsute 70s rock everywhere.

Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

H.e.a.t: just made the most complete album of their career.

H.e.a.t

Into The Great Unknown

EAR MUSIC

Having been galvanised seven years ago by the addition of former *Swedish Idol* winner Erik Grönwall on vocals, H.e.a.t took huge creative and commercial strides with 2012's *Address The Nation* and 2014's *Tearing Down The Walls*, the latter transforming them into a bona fide headline act, even here in the UK.

With ex-member Dave Dalone (now known as Sky Davis) returning to the line-up, in many ways *Into The Great Unknown* sees H.e.a.t picking up right where they left off. Opening track *Bastard Of Society* and the delightfully titled ditty *Shit City* remind us of their youthful irreverence.

And yet for all their welcome familiarity, these 10 songs also throw out some small tremors. The songwriting has undoubtedly matured, without sacrificing the effervescence that makes them so darned exciting. Elsewhere producer Tobias Lindell throws in slick production tricks to enhance the music's poppier side – a potentially dangerous move, but it works.

H.e.a.t. have just made the most complete album of their career. Watch their rise continue.

Boulevard

Boulevard IV – Luminescence MELODIC ROCK

Reunited for Firefest back in 2014, Canadians Boulevard have just released their first studio album in 27 years. *Luminescence* is an effortlessly classy and engaging set that reminds us why they were so well regarded first time around. From the hypnotic *Let's Come Together* to the trimmed immediacy of *Slipping Away*, it is fabulous.

Steelheart

Through Worlds Of Stardust

FRONTIERS

As the singer of *We All Die Young* (mimed by Mark Wahlberg in the film *Rock Star*), Steelheart vocalist Miljenko Matijevic has an amazing voice. Despite some Zeppelin-ish moments, *Through Worlds Of Stardust* is a modern rock album which is surely destined to divide a fan-base that craves something more pure and melodic.

Kee Of Hearts

Key Of Hearts FRONTIERS

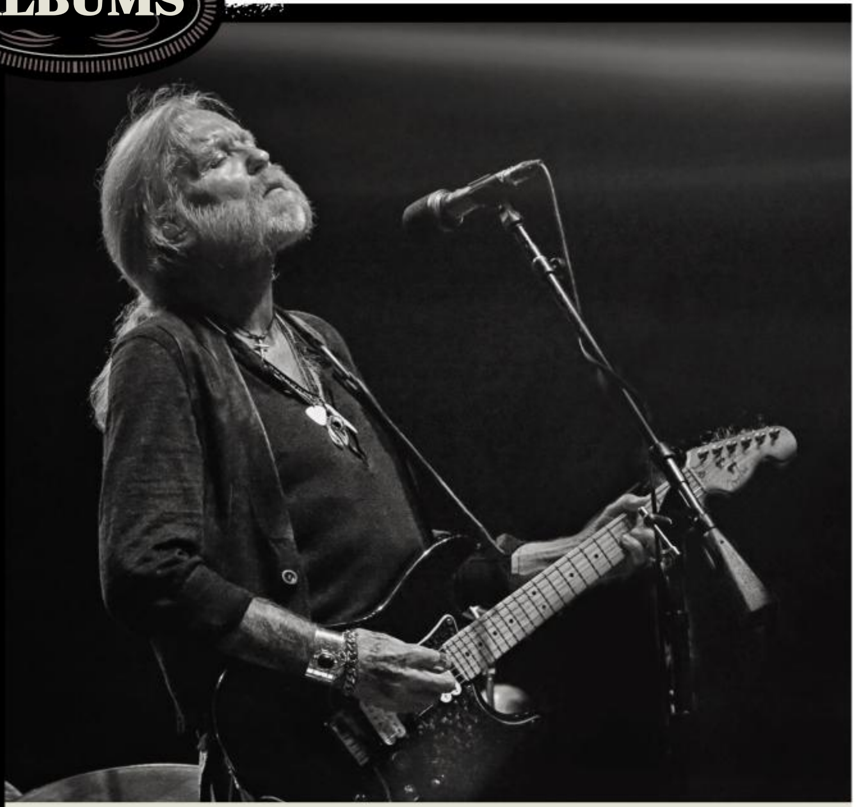
Okay let's disregard the cringe-inducing band name – Kee Of Hearts unite the talents of guitarist Kee Marcello (Easy Action, Europe) and Fair Warning singer Tommy Heart. Unsurprisingly, this debut, made "under the direction" of producer Alessandro Del Vecchio (whatever that means), melds crisp, Scandi-esque urgency with Tommy Heart's more Teutonic, lighter-waving inclinations.

Newman

Aerial AOR HEAVEN

British singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Steve Newman has been crafting high-quality melodic hard rock for two decades. *Aerial*, his eleventh release, is a delightful record, its standouts including *Can't Stop Loving You* and the pomp-tastic *Don't Wake The Lion*. Overall it supports the view that both Newman and his catalogue should be *far* better known than they are.

THE HARD STUFF
ALBUMS



Gregg Allman

Southern Blood ROUNDER

A final, defiant wave of the flag from the southern rock pioneer.

It's there, at just about the one-minute mark of *Southern Blood*'s opening track, a tender voice calling out: *'I hope you're haunted by the music of my soul when I'm gone.'* Whether the decision to begin the album with *My Only True Friend* was made before Allman's death in May is unknown, but it serves as the most perfect curtain-raiser for a record that celebrates an oft-overlooked musician with elegance and style.

Six years on from the Grammy-nominated *Low Country Blues*, it's a comfort to Allman's fans that it should all end on such a high, quality control being a primary consideration when a man of his age (69) and deteriorating health from liver cancer could be forgiven for just phoning it in with a weary, "Will this do?".

There are ten exemplary songs here, which, the self-written first track aside, showcase the singer as a formidable interpreter of other people's material, in most cases close friends or contemporaries. His love for the long-gone Lowell George positively beams out of every bar of *Willin'*, a righteously rustic powerhouse of an anthem, counterbalanced by the southern blues testifying of Penn & Oldham's *Out Of Left Field*, with a stop-off for sustenance on the Grateful Dead's *Black Muddy River*.

The warmth of the music owes much to its environment, laid down at the legendary FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, where Gregg and brother Duane recorded many of their finest moments nigh on 50 years earlier. Producer Don Was clearly had those old Allman Brothers cuts in mind when fashioning the sonic template of *Southern Blood*, and there are oblique references to the elder sibling (who passed away in 1971) on the closing *Song For Adam*, a Jackson Browne number on which Browne himself appears.

Ultimately, the album can't help but be an exercise in nostalgia, its maker perhaps aware that time was running out fast, the selections arguably Allman's way of telling already fallen friends like Lowell George, Jerry Garcia and Tim Buckley that he was on his way to join them. It's a theory that begins to carry serious water as early as the aforementioned opener, which is immediately followed by an unfussy strum through Buckley's *Once I Was*.

It's not often anyone has the (albeit heartbreaking) luxury of being able to map out their own memorial, and Allman leaves us with his head held high and a record of rare beauty.

Terry Staunton

The Horrors

V CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

Southend post-punk revivalists shoot for the big league.

Edging further away from their shoegazing goth-rock roots with each new release, The Horrors resolutely target the alt.pop mainstream on their fifth album.

Produced by Paul Epworth, the multiple Grammy-winner who has worked with Adele, Muse, U2, Coldplay and dozens more, *V* combines expansive arena-rock sonics with a heavy dose of lush electronics. Indeed, the stern synths and metal-bashing percussion of *Hologram* sound like vintage Tubeway Army, while the robo-riffing thunder of *Machine* falls between Suede and the Sisters Of Mercy.

Faris Badwan's polished croon lends a classy air to proceedings, though some of these studio-sculpted anthems clearly owe more to production wizardry and guitar-pedal pyrotechnics than solid songwriting.

Weighed Down is an overlong exercise in the kind of post-punk pastiche The Horrors were doing a decade ago, while the anodyne goth-lite plodder *It's A Good Life* could be Tears For Fears wearing too much guyliner. Big ambitions are admirable, but not the calculated blandness sometimes required to achieve them.

Stephen Dalton

Aiden Connell

Grio PLEASANT VALLEY

The new voice of London introduces himself.

There have been attempts in some quarters to pigeonhole Aiden Connell as a blues singer (something he tackles on *Everybody Else* here), but there's so much more to his debut album than that. In fact, the most traditionally blues song here is the stripped-back, loping, soul-baring *Fell On Black Days*. It isn't a Soundgarden cover, but if it had been, it wouldn't have been out of place, because *Grio* has a grungy, alt.rock twist that breaks down genre boundaries.

Connell's voice is wonderful – warm but dark, and often sounding remarkably like Mark Lanegan, particularly on *Requiem For Love* and wry rocker *Bleeding Me Dry*. Paired with his timeless songwriting, this record suggests that he's in it for the long haul, neatly sidestepping current trends and making a unique space for himself.

There's a bite to his writing too. The Jesus And Mary Chain got in there first with *I Hate Rock 'N' Roll* as a song title, but Connell's drips with disdain for style-over-substance bands who cherish clichéd rock-star decadence over innovation.

These songs worm their way into your soul, finely crafted but oozing with personality, and combining to make for a very special debut.

Emma Johnston

King Creature

Volume One MARSHALL

Old-school metal debut.

You can almost hear King Creature's veins bulging as opener *Lowlife* fires up, all white-knuckled malice and fury. It's a punishing kick off that immediately conjures up the ghost of Alice in Chains with Layne Staley at the mic. Those haunting vocals liberally pepper most of the album, and with the best bits of Soundgarden, Zakk Wylde and Black Label Society added to the mix, it makes for a heady, heavy and melodious brew.

The Sabbathy battering of *Power*, *The Pusher* and closer *Wrath* showcase a band capable of unfettered brutality, while the eerie spaciness of *Can't Be Saved* and mellow pace of *Can You Forgive Me?* provide welcome respite from the testosterone-driven mayhem.

Impressive groove-laden metal that augers well for the future.

Essi Berelian

Kaipa

Children Of The Sounds

INSIDE OUT

Pagan prog-folkers thank the Wicker Man for the harvest.

Often described as Swedish cousins of Yes or Genesis, old-school prog veterans Kaipa have enjoyed a prolific second act since re-forming in 2002. Featuring just one survivor from their foundational seventies phase (guitarist Hans Lundin), the current configuration rack up their eighth album together with *Children Of The Sounds*.

Partly inspired by the wide-open landscapes around the city of Uppsala, these five extended pieces are mostly grand prog-folk pastorals with a smooth jazz-fusion sheen, their nature-worship lyrics woven with filigree threads of bagpipe-style guitar, gleaming synthesiser

PATRICIA O'DRISCOLL/PRESS

fanfares and Celtic-meets-Nordic fiddle flurries.

Much of this baroque retro-pagan whimsy inevitably hovers perilously close to Brian Pern-level parody. The nine-minute grand finale, *What's Behind The Fields*, is certainly guilty of proggy bloat and late-period Floydian guitar sprawl.

Otherwise, Lundin and his younger cohorts bounce along with a pleasingly agile and melodic zest – even during the album's mammoth, 17-minute centrepiece *On The Edge Of New Horizons*, which shades into Queen and Radiohead territory in places.

Stephen Dalton

Kadavar

Rough Times NUCLEAR BLAST

Teutonic retro-metal makeweights rev their engines.

The endless stream of Mittel-European bands that have rolled off the stoner metal production line in the last decade puts Volkswagen to shame. Berlin's Kadavar have always been the equivalent of a VW Golf: reliable but dull.

Until now. Where its predecessors were as thrilling as a Sunday drive to the seaside, the trio have souped up their engine on album number four. The loud bits are louder, the fuzzy bits are fuzzier and, in the case of *Die Baby Die* and *Tribulation Nation*, there are tunes that have the good grace to actually stick around in the hippocampus. They'll still never win a Grand Prix, but at least they've got off the starting grid.

Dave Everley

Reverend & The Makers

The Death Of A King COOKING VINYL

Exotic, exploratory psych rock, with surprisingly little Jez.

Like a political stopped clock, Jon McClure's glory day has finally arrived. Back in New Labour's 2007, outspoken Sheffield politico McClure was wise to keep his opinions in the papers and off his records. In 2017, with a politically engaged youth hoisting socialism up the mast, the time has surely come for The Reverend's fiery diatribe album *Oh Jeremy Corbyn!*.

Instead, McClure has followed the amorphous, psychedelic magic of 2015's *Mirrors* by upping sticks to Thailand to record another track-merged suite of folk (*Juliet Knows*), psych blues (*Too Tough To Die, Autumn Leaves*), retro pop (*Auld Reekie Blues, Monkey See, Monkey Do*) and ragtime music hall (*Carlene, Black Cat*). It's more concerned with the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej than the ascendance of Jezza.

A missed sitter, then, but another intriguing pop record – McClure dabbles in spooky country voodoo on *Miss Haversham*, Shinto pop on *Bang Saray* and, on *Boomerang*, even something you could only feasibly call jungle jazz.

Long live the *King*.

Mark Beaumont

Primus

The Desaturating Seven ATCO

Quirky and engaging as ever.

It's typical of Primus that they'd take a children's book, in this case *The Rainbow Goblins*, and turn it into something claustrophobic, bizarre and a little terrifying.

The first studio album to feature the classic line-up of Les Claypool, Tim Alexander and Larry Lalonde since 1995's *Tales From The Punchbowl*, the music here gives free rein to the trio's tendency to expand on disciplined arrangements and go off on joyous tangents. Yet however much they revel in free-form expression, Primus never lose sight of the need to bring everything back to basics when necessary.

The storyline is about goblins who steal the colours of the rainbow, and you can feel the move towards monochrome as the music develops. The way in which LaLonde's punctuating guitar interacts with Claypool's squirting basslines is remarkable on tracks like *The Trek* and *The Storm*, with Alexander adding sparing fills when necessary.

The overall result is both sparse yet overflowing, in a fashion in keeping with the band's reputation. And *The End?* concludes everything on a discordant note of disturbed uncertainty. Brilliantly perverse.

Malcolm Dome

Chris Hillman

Bidin' My Time ROUNDER

Byrd man flies again, with famous friends.

Tom Petty had a hand in Roger McGuinn's return to the spotlight in the early 90s, writing and performing on *Back From Rio*, the Byrds figurehead's first album in a decade. Ever the fan, he plays an even bigger role for another founding member of the band here, producing Hillman's first release following a similar ten-year layoff.

There are tangible echoes of Hillman's past on *Bidin' My Time*, not just through revisiting The Byrds on *Bells Of Rhymney* and *Here She Comes Again*. He doffs a laconic Stetson to his days in the Flying Burrito Brothers on the self-written prairie lament *Restless*, and a version of *Wildflowers* that arguably edges Petty's original.

None of this is especially groundbreaking or radical, but the sound of a veteran in fine voice, making music with his pals (McGuinn and David Crosby are also along for the ride), is very persuasive indeed.

Terry Staunton

Chris Rea

Road Songs For Lovers BMG

Back behind the wheel.

It's been quite a while since Chris Rea released an album that wasn't accompanied by a couple of DVDs or a book of paintings. All of which is grist to Rea's broadening artistic mill, but this time he's confined himself to recording an album. He's even gone to a proper studio to make it, and it shows – there's a focus and a sense of purpose that you don't get from tinkering around in your home studio.

As the title suggests, Rea is on familiar ground once again, but his fans won't be complaining. After all, the scenery on any road trip is an endless vista of observations and speculations, and Rea's lyrics can evoke both with consummate ease, drawing you closer as the album progresses.

The musical class on this record is, of course, a given.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: ALT.ROCK

By Emma Johnston

Nadine Shah: deliciously dark, gothic melodies and gorgeous, strident vocals.

Nadine Shah

Holiday Destination 1965

If any year in recent memory was likely to inspire a political record, it's 2016, a horror show of rising nationalism, civil wars and an ever-worsening refugee crisis. Nadine Shah has deftly channelled her fury and disbelief at it all into a record that's both fiercely intelligent and, with its tense Krautrock rhythms, deliciously dark, gothic melodies and gorgeous, strident vocals, moreishly listenable.

Her anger is laser-focused, the title track railing against the lack of compassion for desperate refugees arriving on the shores of Kos, while the simultaneously twitchy and soaring *Mother Fighter* deftly humanises the Syrian crisis.

The political is personal, too, lead single *Out The Way* slapping down anyone who suggests that Shah, as a second-generation immigrant, should go back to where she came from – which is South Shields in Tyneside, but then racists aren't the brightest bunch, are they?

It's not hectoring, it's just holding a mirror up to the world, sending out a brilliant rallying cry and making Shah a national treasure in waiting.

The Life And Times

The Life And Times SLIMSTYLE

These Kansas City alt. rockers have been perfecting warm and fuzzy shoegaze since 2002, and their self-titled latest is their most immersive yet. There's a positivity to their dense sound, and *Out Thru The In Door* even manages to conjure old-school QOTSA with its cool groove and hazy vocals, while *T=D/S* shows that a disco beat can work in the most unlikely place. This noise is a joyful one.

Manchester Orchestra

A Black Mile To The Surface

LOMA VISTA RECORDINGS

Andy Hull's band took a turn down grunge alley with 2013's *Cope*, but here they're on more familiar ground, with an emotional take on alternative indie rock inspired by the frontman's new experiences in fatherhood, set to a soundtrack of lush harmonies, intense melody, proggy layers and shades of plaid-clad Americana.

Low Flying Hawks

Genkaku MAGNETIC EYE

Fancy a wallow? Then come on in, the water's disgusting. Featuring Melvins' King Buzzo on opener *Smile*, Low Flying Hawks have honed the art of doomy heaviness to a fine point. The title is apparently Japanese for 'hallucination', and as you're dragged further into psychedelic, leaden, down-tuned riffs and disembodied vocals, it becomes ever more apt. This is belligerent, nasty and well worth exploring.

Flat Worms

Flat Worms CASTLE FACE

It's a particularly post-punk trick, the stitching together of fizzy, excitable music and thoroughly bored vocals, and Flat Worms have it down pat. The newcomers' tales of the minutiae of American life – bikes, girls, suburbia *et al* – are presented with a straight face and a barrage of wonky riffs and antisocial feedback. It feels retro, a description you can bet Flat Worms would be proud of.

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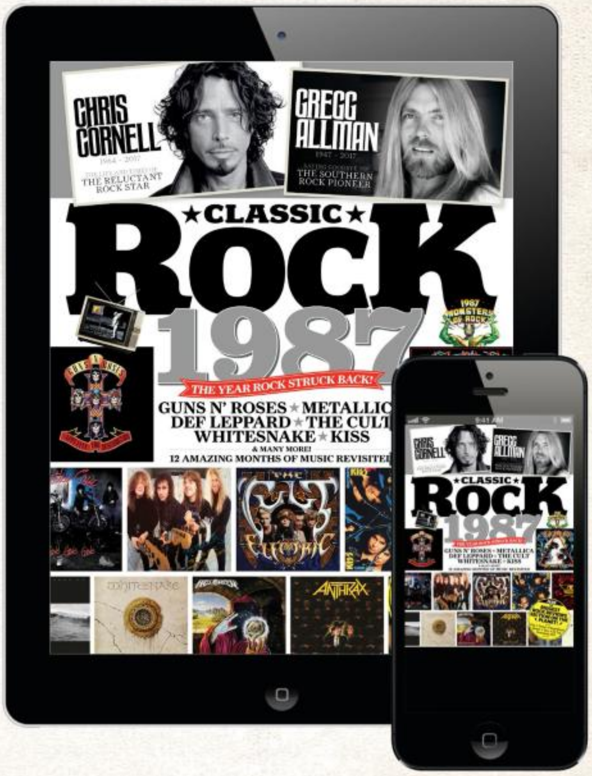

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Black Sabbath

The Ten Year War BMG

Metal pioneers' first eight albums remastered, wonderfully repackaged and still remarkable.

Upon disbanding reluctantly following their final live show in February, Black Sabbath, venerable harbingers of doom (and countless other incarnations of the heavy metal they initially conceptualized at the close of the 1960s and latterly came to define), received a veritable deluge of plaudits. "Pure heavy-metal mastery," gushed *Rolling Stone* following the band's valedictory home-town show. *Telegraph* and *Evening Standard* reviewers both rated earlier nights on The End tour as four-star triumphs, while the *Guardian* gave a maximum five-star rave to the Sabs' "blitzkrieg of hard rock". But it wasn't always thus.

It's no exaggeration to say that while Black Sabbath were producing their finest, most influential work in the early to mid-1970s, the contemporary rock press and broader musical milieu's self-appointed 'intelligentsia' utterly loathed them. From Lester Bangs sniffily dismissing their self-titled debut in *Rolling Stone* as 'discordant jams' forward, Black Sabbath were relentlessly scorned. Scant months after they delivered *Sabotage*, their artistic high-water mark, the heavens opened and proceeded to storm down upon John Peel, DJ-ing at an Essex open-air show. "Don't worry," Peely droned, apparently charmingly, from the stage, "I brought some Black Sabbath albums along to protect my records from the rain."

It was classic withering Peel, yet few laughed. These self-same Sabbath albums, so readily dismissed by the rarified, velvet-looned elite of the hip media, sold in their millions. Black Sabbath were a people's band; not pop, but certainly populist. Metropolitan glam-era tastemakers with soft voices and even softer hands might have regarded Ozzy and his Sabs as the barbarians at

the gate, but the factory fodder packing out the Odeons and surrendering to the riff, gazed up at a stage full of Osbourne, Iommi, Butler and Ward and saw only their own.

Sabbath were homegrown Stooges, riff-monsters from an industrial heartland; they were everything the coming press-darling punk horde purported to be, but in a break with what accepted elitist rock press protocol demanded, they not only sold an awful lot of records, but also sold them without the blessing of the inkies.

Result: blanket critical condemnation and hatred. In many ways it was this sustained press derision that created the fierce loyalty that defines the metal community to this day, and no metal band faced more of it than Sabbath.

Ultimately, though, Sabbath didn't need the press, because their recordings recalibrated all existing expectations of just how primal, powerful, hard and heavy rock could be. Inspired by the then current mode for diabolic Dennis Wheatley horror, they set about accentuating the evil inherent in 'the devil's music', located the tritone, showcased it in their eponymous debut's eponymous theme tune and never looked back.

The Ten Year War, meanwhile, comprises Sabbath's first eight albums, originally released between 1970 and '78 and representing what's arguably the band's finest work. Available across eight remastered splatter-vinyl 12-inch discs and a couple of rare seven-inch single reproductions, with a hardback book and a reprinted '78 tour programme and '72 poster, it also comes complete with (brace yourself) a crucifix-shaped USB with the eight albums presented in hi-def MQA audio, that you can wear around your neck, just like Tony Iommi would.

Whack the USB stick in your slot, bung on your headphones and prepare to be amazed. Crisp, powerful, downright malicious, Sabbath's familiar sonic immensity snaps into sharp focus from within the murk of accepted technical limitations, gets mercilessly medieval on your ears, and it's only a joy. Ozzy's extraordinary soul-in-torment vocal, Iommi's crushing, insistent, characteristically metallic riffing, Geezer Butler's pendulously ballsy bass and Bill Ward's thunderously colossal drum assault lock together like a well-oiled machine. And on the occasions they get it just right – *Black Sabbath* and *Paranoid*'s career-defining 1970 title tracks; *Master Of Reality*'s *Children Of The Grave* ('71); Vol. 4's *Tomorrow's Dream* ('72); *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*'s glorious schizophrenia ('73); pretty much all of *Sabotage* ('75), there's really no one better.

When considering *The Ten Year War*'s contents back-to-back, the sudden drop in quality when you slam into the buffers of *Technical Ecstasy* and *Never Say Die* is undeniably apparent. Recorded in '76 and '78 respectively, they're not terrible, but in this esteemed company fetch up short.

'Proof that for five years, Sabbath were metal's best.'

Whatever, the astonishing quality of Sabbath's first six albums more than offsets any minor criticisms one might have of their latter work, and *The Ten Year War* offers irrefutable proof that not only were Sabbath metal's first exponents, but for five years straight they were also its best.

Ian Fortnam

Dokken

Beast From The East

ROCK CANDY

Rocken with Dokken – to the max.

Beast From The East was the final album from the classic Dokken era, before the band split up in 1989. Recorded in Tokyo on the *Back For The Attack* tour the previous year, the band are in full flight as they storm through their best songs in a fervent performance.

This reissue is the entire gig restored, as opposed to other versions with a few songs missing, so in addition to the original tracklist you get *Unchain The Night, Dream Warriors, In My Dreams* and *Breaking The Chains* among many inspiring moments. It shows those four in the best possible light, with Don Dokken in great voice and George Lynch delivering some thunderous guitar.

There's also the studio recording *Walk Away*, which underlines how Dokken still had a magic melodic touch. Add new and revealing sleeve notes, based on a interview with Don, and you've got a fine package of late-80s Dokken revelry.

Malcolm Dome

Albert King

Born Under A Bad Sign

STAX

Sign of the times.

The Stax 60 campaign is celebrating the shape-shifting Memphis record label's diamond jubilee by releasing vinyl replicas of classic albums by Otis Redding, Sam & Dave and other soul legends, along with this seminal 1967 record by singer/guitarist Albert King that rescued the blues for modern times.

At that time, blues was being edged out by soul as the most popular music in America's black communities. Known as the Velvet Bulldozer due to his smooth voice and hefty size, King had been recording since the 1950s, including 1962's *The Big Blues* debut album. Stax put him in their studio with their superlative in-house band Booker T. And The MG's (who included guitarist Steve Cropper) and recorded singles including *Laundromat Blues, Crosscut Saw* and *Born Under A Bad Sign*. The latter, written by Booker T and William Bell, became an instant classic, covered by Cream, Hendrix and countless blues artists. The song also became the title track of an album credited with changing the face of American music, thanks to the magical combination of King's powerful guitar sting and the insidious soul swing of the MG's, who also wrote *The Hunter* (covered by Free, Blue Cheer and Ike & Tina Turner), and it still packs a lean punch.

Kris Needs

Motörhead

Under Cover

MOTÖRHEAD MUSIC

Motörhead run ramshackle over some of their fave tunes.

What to do when you're living in a post-Lemmy world? Less rock, less roll, get your picture taken next to the statue at the Lemmy Bar at the Rainbow in LA? Although I'd have gone for the *Overkill*-era Lemmy, all snaggle-toothed and wild eyes, than the contemplative, ruminative-looking end-of-the-bar-guy they've got there now. But then you go with the Lemmy era you know best, I guess.

This collection of Motörhead doing other people's songs covers most of the bases of a band who were always happy to thunder through a cover (soundtracks, tributes, B-sides, even if it was rare to see them do covers live; I remember a Ramones tune at the House Of Blues when Joey Ramone died, but not many more). There's a demo version of The Ramones' *Rockaway Beach* included here, which is as scratchy and worn as you might imagine and, remarkably, lacks any of that patented, and much missed, Motörhead kick. Much better is their gnarly version of Metallica's *Whiplash*; if you didn't know any better you'd swear it was one of their own. Ditto Twisted Sister's *Shoot 'Em Down*, which Motörhead covered for the TS tribute album *Twisted Forever*. *Hellraiser*, which Lemmy *wrote* with Ozzy, seems like an anomaly, especially as it appeared on Motörhead's *March Or Die*, but it's explosive and enjoyable nevertheless. Which is more than can be said for their rarely heard (there's probably a reason for that) take on Bowie's *"Heroes"* or their leaden *Jumpin' Jack Flash*.

Philip Wilding

ELO

Out Of The Blue 40th Anniversary

SONY/LEGACY

Four decades and 10 million sales later, the prog classic double can still amaze.

ELO were everywhere, omnipotent in the 1970s. Perfect driving music. For a generation of befuddled dole-tainted schoolchildren, Jeff Lynne in all his pomp: curly pseudo-Afro perm, denim flares, pilot sunglasses, immaculately-kept beard, spaceships; signified an entire era. But at the height of punk, for many of us he was an object of scorn with his symphonic pop pretensions, concept albums and overwrought strings. The fact remains however, that *Out Of The Blue* is the finest concept album written about the weather ever recorded.

And, oh my GOD! *Mr Blue Sky!*

In 1970, Lynne formed ELO in Birmingham alongside Roy Wood (The Move) and drummer Bev Bevan with the intention of creating modern pop songs with classical overtones and a distinct Beatles influence. So distinct that ELO were famously described as "sons of the Beatles" by John Lennon himself, and the three other Beatles all collaborated with Lynne (including on 'new' Beatles tracks). This description has become codified over the years – possibly by Lynne himself, who has never been shy of a little self-belief – to the band The Beatles could have been. If we can ignore Wings for a moment.

But, oh my GOD! *Sweet Talkin' Woman!*

Truth or hyperbole? It all depends on how well-produced you like your pop music. Bombast or silence? Space or texture? The finest ELO songs (*Wild West Hero, Steppin Out, The Diary Of Horace Wimp*) had a heart of melancholy to them that could not be disguised, no matter how many layers of synth were added. Or spaceships. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the spaceships only served to hearten the humanity at the core. The era-devouring monster, 1977's concept album *Out Of The Blue* had many such moments, in between the sound of thunder crashing and rain lashing, and spookily-disconnected vocodered vocals 30 years ahead of schedule. Have a listen to side three, the symphonic *Concerto For A Rainy Day*. Not punk at all, and derided by those who considered themselves such, but still loved by most. Except of course by those who hated them. (*Rolling Stone* held at the time that the album was "perfectly hollow and bland", simultaneously grasping the point and completely missing it.)

And, oh my GOD! *Turn To Stone!*

The 40th anniversary reissue will feature the vinyl edition released on picture disc. One up on the original yellow vinyl for *Wild West Hero*.

And, oh my God! *Wild West fucking Hero!*

Everett True

The Doors

The Singles RHINO

The music isn't over yet.

It's now 50 years since the Doors' first album arrived like an incendiary broadcast from a heliocentric world where rock had never dared venture before, swiftly followed by the equally astonishing *Strange Days*. The expected creative recycling started with the first album's latest deluxe reissue. Now comes this pocket-hitting box containing 20 singles they released until 1978's spoken word *American Prayer*, including live 45s and mono radio pressings, all in replicas of their original sleeves.

Hearing these songs again in succession is like sitting on a rollercoaster that starts in an acid orgy on Mount Olympus. Those first two albums still send hallucinogenic chills half a century later, then the Doors start going inexorably down as Jimbo's booze intake goes up, sliding through tortuously-created pop confections until the glorious final starburst of *Riders On The Storm* rescues their name from disgraced oblivion (although the post-Jim band's attempts at keeping the name alive still sound sadly limp).

The set (also available on double CD for poorer fans who need another compilation) shows again what a truly unique group the Doors once were, while amplifying the frustrating waste of Morrison's self-destructive decline.

Kris Needs

Suzi Quatro

Legend PLEDGE

Back with a new album, tour, plus this remastered 'best of'.

As she sings on her 1974 hit *The Wild One*: '*I'm a red-hot fox, I can take the knocks/I'm a hammer from hell/ Honey, can't you tell?*' Damn right.

Before anyone, there was Suzi. Bass-player and singer with the terrific all-girl 1960s garage band The Pleasure Seekers – the band she formed with her sisters at the age of 14 in Detroit, Michigan. Original leather cat-suit clad inspiration for Joan Jett. Doubtless you know her eight Top 20 UK hits between 1973 and 1979; the tremendous *Can The Can*, the electrifying *Daytona Demon*, the rampant *Devil Gate Drive*, and so forth. Alongside Glitter and Holder and Bowie, she defined glam rock on British (and Australian) screens during that era – but she always had a harder, leaner edge than her contemporaries.

Here, one felt, was a singer who lived it – and with a female swagger that set her apart in an age of cock-rock strut. No one doubted Suzi, or the ferocity of her big-hearted, good-natured, rip-roaring biker anthems. (Quatro later claimed ownership of "symbolic cock rock".) Ironic, then, that her biggest (and pretty much only) American hit was *Stumblin' In*, the sweet gravel-throated duet with Smokie singer Chris Norman.

All the aforementioned are present on this handpicked-by-the-lady-herself compilation, as are other great floor-fillers (*If You Can't Give Me Love, 48 Crash, She's In Love With You*) and lesser-known but equally fine numbers such as the wink-and-a-nod *Skin Tight Skin* and *Shine My Machine*.

Further down are a couple of forgettable fillers (*Suicide, Wiser Than You*) and a few cannibalistic moments, but man! Suzi Quatro – what a legend!

The reissue comes on gold-coloured double vinyl.

Everett True

Feeder

The Best Of Feeder BMG

More than just a look back.

Is it something in the water coming off the Brecon Beacons? How else to explain the longevity of South Wales bands like Feeder and the Manics way beyond the eras that spawned them. Staying true to their beliefs has certainly helped, creating a lasting bond with their fans.

Feeder never had the political dynamic of the Manics but their own home-grown values haven't changed since their *Polythene* debut 20 years ago. They've grown up, survived their traumas and got better at what they do.

Like their earlier *Singles Collection* a decade back, they haven't bothered with chronology on this three-CD Best Of. Instead they've compiled a couple of stonking set lists. The first starts with *Feeling A Moment, Come Back Around* and *Eskimo* while the second kicks in with *We Are The People, Universe Of Life* and *Idaho*.

Polythene remains the most common touchstone with five tracks as they zip around their catalogue. Although interestingly

PRESS/ROB SHANAHAN

all four tracks from *Echo Park* are corralled onto the first CD while the four tracks from *Silent Cry* are confined to the second.

The third CD contains nine new tracks with enough forceful musical and lyrical hooks to prove that this collection is not an epitaph

Hugh Fielder

Various Artists

Gary Crowley's Punk & New Wave DEMON

Curation breathes new life into a once tired format.

The world may be full to the brim of new wave and punk compilations, but it's still possible to find freshness in the hoary old archives of gobland, as DJ Gary Crowley proves with this unambiguously-named collection. Despite a sleeve displaying an anachronistic ghetto-blaster, this is a set that could only have been compiled by someone who was there at the time. With a disc jockey's sense of running order, songs like *White Mice* by the Modettes follow the Vibrators' *We Vibrate*, while obscurities like *Talking Hands* by The Collectors and The Nice Men's *Nuclear Summer* nestle next to the better known *All About You* by the Scars and Girls At Our Best's *Getting Nowhere Fast*. At times it may seem like a jumble of disparate styles, but that's what the era was like, as punk orthodoxy was constantly challenged by power pop (the brilliant *Language School* by the Tours) and lost brilliance (The Tea Set's marvellous *Parry Thomas*). This set achieves the rare feat of making an increasingly clichéd format exciting, and even introduced this old new-wave lag to a few previously completely unknown songs

David Quantick

D.A.F.

Das Ist D.A.F. GROENLAND

Düsseldorf electronic duo's golden years, plus remix disc.

Based around the original nucleus of Gabi Delgado-López and drummer Robert Görl, Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft were one of a number of angular, highly innovative German groups to emerge from the kraut-punk scene to create the building blocks for later scenes such as techno and industrial. Their second album, the first album Mute records ever released was *Die Kleinen Und Die Bösen*, at which point they were a scratchy five-piece including guitars and synths, creating music of sinister urgency, not least on the piledriving *Gewalt* (Violence).

It was on their following three albums recorded as a duo, however, *Alles Ist Gut, Gold Und Liebe* and *Für Immer*, released between 1980 and 1982, that López and Górl created the muscular, cropped, brutally ironic, whiplash style which has been much imitated and drawn of for inspiration but never matched. Consisting solely of vocals, drums and synths, tracks like *Der Mussolini* still overwhelm you more than 35 years on with their dark, warped velocity.

They revelled in perversity; *Sex Unter Wasser* from *Gold Und Liebe* scarcely needs translating, while *Ein Bisschen Krieg* (A Little War) from *Für Immer* was their response to the West German 1982 Eurovision Song Contest winner, Nicole's *A Little Peace*. They benefitted from the timelessly superb production work of Conny Plank, a krautrock veteran, one reason they still sound immaculate. So definitive were these albums, however, that, like Kraftwerk, they eventually left themselves with little else to do. They recorded two further albums in 1986 and 2003 but this collection houses their absolutely essential work.

David Stubbs

Pentangle

The Albums CHERRY RED

At last. A definitive box set from folk-rock's first supergroup.

Even mentioning the names Terry Cox, Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Danny Thompson and Jacqui McShee is enough to send people of a certain vintage into raptures. If they get their hands on this seven-CD collection of Pentangle's first six albums (*The Pentangle/Sweet Child/ Basket Of Light/Cruel Sister/ Reflection/Solomon's Seal*), the essential ones, with lavish extras and fabulous notes, joy will be unconfined.

The combination of Bert and John's mercurial acoustic guitars, that flawless rhythm section and McShee's heavenly vocals is one thing but the quality of the songs is the key. The shimmering *Light Flight*, the traditional murder ballad *Bruton Town*, the sheer British misery of *The Snows* are mere examples of where Pentangle took folk and jazz, making them a conduit between Anne Briggs and Led Zeppelin. Wildly experimental rather than deathlessly authentic they added brass, glockenspiel, sitar, dulcimer – whatever aided the cause. Although they existed in a constant state of tension, thanks to their other projects, when they were in harmony they were unvalled.

The live versions of *House Carpenter* and *She Moved Through The Fair* still shred the listener and there are plenty of alternate versions and unreleased pieces like the early *Market Song* to justify a fan's outlay. Box sets can often be an indulgence. This one is simply essential.

Max Bell

Stone Temple Pilots

Core (Super Deluxe Edition) RHINO

Remastered debut album gets stuffed to the gills with musical artefacts.

The turbulence and tragedy that dogged Stone Temple Pilots over the years, from addiction and trouble with the law to the sacking and later death of troubled frontman Scott Weiland, right up until the recent sad loss of his replacement, Chester Bennington, are so extreme, it's good to go back to the beginning to remember the optimism and ambition they had in the first place. It's the 25th anniversary of their debut, *Core*, and this remastered super deluxe version is jam-packed with demos, session tracks, festival sets, their *MTV Unplugged* performance and alternative takes.

They were caught up in the grunge tornado at the time, but revisiting *Core* shows how, more than the majority of their peers, they embraced the old-fashioned, unashamed rock'n'roll swagger that many shunned at the time. *Plush*, particularly, remains an absolute *banger*, Dean DeLeo's instantly memorable riff still sounding fresh today, and Weiland's rich vocals attacking the soaring verses with show-stopping abandon. *Sex Type Thing*, meanwhile, is a pitch black exploration of entitled, dangerous machismo that, in a swing version nestled among the collected B-sides, takes on an even more depraved and unsettling tone.

There's a *lot* to get through here, and by its very nature, tackling it all in one sitting will be way too rich for many – there are six different versions of *Plush* alone, and constant bombardment with the same songs presented in slightly different ways over and over again is the fast road to madness. But approaching it in manageable batches, or as a pick'n'mix of rarities, paints a vivid picture of where the band were at in 1992, as they revelled in their newfound ability to hold a huge audience rapt during the live sets, and the already polished sound of the demos demonstrating their day-one ambition. More interesting, though, are the songs that aren't on the main album, such as a reptilian take on David Bowie's *Andy Warhol* from *MTV Unplugged* that speaks volumes about Weiland's inspiration when it came to his live persona. The melodramatic, goth-tinged *Only Dying* demo, meanwhile, was written for the soundtrack to *The Crow* but was shelved after the death of its star, Brandon Lee. STP always encouraged their own hype, so this fully-stocked monument to their introduction to the world is a fitting one.

Emma Johnson

PRESS/KATRINA DICKSON

ANDRE CSILLAG/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Chris Spedding

The RAK Years *CHERRY RED*

Ex-Womble superstar-sideman's solo collection boxed and reappraised.

It is the nature of the sideman – Mick Ronson, Steve Cropper, Ron Wood – to be to some degree anonymous. The more people the sideman works for, the more anonymous the sideperson. But there are exceptions, musicians who've avoided the often-sneering tag of "just a session guy". Some of these exceptions are rock legends.

Chris Spedding is, without a doubt, a rock legend. His work for hundreds of major rock figures – everyone from Bryan Ferry to The Wombles – has been heard and purchased by millions, but as a solo artist, he's known for one song, the semi-novelty hit *Motobikin'*. Cognoscenti – many attached to his work with Sharks and King Mob – also know that there's a rich seam of solo work to be discovered. It's often been hard to find and out of print, so kudos to Cherry Red for releasing this four-CD set of Spedding's work for Micky Most's RAK label.

It's a fascinating collection, spanning the mid 70s and the start of the 80s, and one which illustrates both why Spedding is so respected and why he never quite became a pop singles sensation. His debut solo album, 1976's *Chris Spedding*, is a fine set, vaguely similar to the work Dave Edmunds was doing at the same time, with a swamp pop element more familiar to fans of the work of Link Wray (and the sheer joy and hilarity of *Guitar Jamboree*, in which Spedding carries off the guitar stylings of everyone from Chuck Berry to Jimi Hendrix). But what makes it Spedding's own is both a sense of humour in the lyrics and delivery and, of course, a snappiness in the guitar playing that few others can match.

Perhaps – along with his self-effacing nature, not always an asset in a front man – it's this genius for brevity that set Spedding apart; very much an adherent of the 'say something once, why say it again?' school of rock, his songs leap in, make their point and leap out again. By 1977's *Hurt*, he was certainly more in tune with the times, and – he never actually recorded with the Sex Pistols, as myth has it – the brilliant *Pogo Dancing* single (recorded with the Vibrators) should have been a bigger hit. Ever adaptable with the very new-wave stylings of *Guitar Graffiti*, but he saved some of his best work for 1980s album *I'm Not Like Everyone Else*, whose title track remains one of the best Kinks covers around – and also works well as a five word career summary.

David Quantick

Elvis Presley

A Boy From Tupelo *RCA*

Dead Sea Scrolls expanded.

For the sake or argument – and these days, there's always got to be argument – let's just say that this is where it all began. Yes, *Rocket 88*. Yes, the cultural misappropriation of African American R&B. Yes, fat Bill bloody Haley. But if Lennon and Richards both cite Elvis as the crooning spoon from which they first sipped the primordial soup of rock, then Elvis it is.

Vegas Elvis, the depleted rhinestone incarnation that The Clash scornfully decried even as he trudged toward his final '77 throne-room destiny, is nowhere to be seen on *A Boy From Tupelo*. These extraordinary 1953-55 Sun sessions, collated across three discs with surviving live and radio sessions in the most definitive collection so far, exude a raw, feral power that retains its potency across six decades. An other-worldly southern gothic feel is only intensified by primitive production values. Combining the warm reverb of Sam Phillips's Sun Studio, the refreshing economy of Scotty Moore's rockabilly-referencing ES-295, Bill Black's evocative walking bass and Elvis's supernaturally salacious vocal, a dark voodoo infests every last seductive lick. *That's All Right* is the punchy headline, but delve deeper and be dazzled, *I'll Never Let You Go, Little Darling* stalks like a David Lynch villain and those 'birth of rock' moments come thick and fast. Not least during *Baby, Let's Play House* when Elvis sneers *"I'd rather see you dead little girl than to be with another man"* and you just know he means it. Seminal, phenomenal, indispensable.

Ian Fortnam

Vardis

Reissues *DISSONANCE*

Built for speed.

Wakefield warriors Vardis had one of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal's most charismatic characters in flaxen-haired axe hero Steve Zodiac. But while his fireball fretboard frenetics were vastly entertaining, the band's songwriting abilities were not. Vardis wisely released a live album as their debut in 1980, hell-for-leather boogie-fuelled lunacy at its core. The aptly titled *100 M.P.H.* (**8/10**) remains a red-raw combo of cage-fighter aggression and bullet-train acceleration, and contains Vardis' best track *If I Were King* – although its refrain of *'If I were king, I'd rock'n'roll'* does conjure up a rather alarming picture of Charles, dithering mosh-pit monarch. The band were put into the studio for 1981 follow-up *The World's Insane* (**4/10**) and completely ran out of steam; no boy-racer tyre-shredding shenanigans here, just a plethora of speed humps and traffic-control cameras. *Police Patrol* comes complete with bagpipes by the bloke who played harmonica on Culture Club's *Karma Chameleon* (you couldn't make it up) and the album reaches its nadir with a limp version of Hawkwind's *Silver Machine*. This downward trend continued on 1982's *Quo Vardis* (**4/10**), an album that includes not only the retrospectively ill-advised *Gary Glitter Part One* but also a track titled *Where There's Mods There's Rockers* along with the lyric: *'Where there's women there's whores.'* No wonder Vardis' recent re-formation caused barely a ripple.

Geoff Barton

Rick Derringer

Joy Ride – Solo Albums 1973-1980 *CHERRY RED*

Four-CD box set of celebrated singer/writer/producer.

Rick Derringer was the Alex Chilton-style teen prodigy – he was 17 when he sang The McCoys' 1965 US No.1 *Hang On Sloopy* – who managed to forge a successful 70s career. Looking like a hard rock David Cassidy, he could have been a pop star but he had other plans, like being a blistering guitar-slinger for hire on a lot of your favourite records by Steely Dan, Todd Rundgren, Alice Cooper and Johnny and Edgar Winter.

He was more than just a flashy sidekick, though, as his solo debut *All American Boy* (1973) proved. An underappreciated gem, this time Derringer was the centre of attention with the illustrious guests (Joe Walsh, David Bromberg), and it's a measure of his ability to straddle the cool/commercial divide that it featured both Suzi Quatro and a co-write with Patti Smith (the fab *Hold*). His strongest collection, it ranged from his biggest hit, the hard-kicking boogie of *Rock And Roll, Hoochie Coo*, to lachrymose tongue-in-cheek ballad *The Airport Giveth (The Airport Taketh Away)*. *Spring Fever* (1975) came with a cover of Rufus Thomas's

classic *Walkin' The Dog* as well as Chick Corea on Moog and David Johansen on electric harmonica. *Guitar And Women* (1979) was given a power pop punch and sheen by co-producer Rundgren and featured two tracks written by Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen, then in his *Dream Police* pomp. Completing this four-CD set is *Face To Face* (1980), including a cover of Neil Young's *My My, Hey Hey (Out Of The Blue)*.

Paul Lester

The Rolling Stones

Their Satanic Majesties Request: 50th Anniversary Special Edition ABKO

1967 time capsule returns to haunt and be re-evaluated

No album in the Stones' vast canon has incurred such abuse as *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, including from the band themselves. Inevitably and lazily considered to be their dark-side retort to The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper*, the album was more an acid-fried dispatch from the Stones' besieged front line, reflecting their annus horribilis of drug busts, managerial upheavals and Brian Jones's deteriorating condition exacerbated by losing Anita Pallenberg to Keith Richards.

The Stones themselves ain't involved. So, in contrast to the expanded feast that accompanied *Sgt. Pepper's* 50th, it remains in its original 10-track form with new stereo mix joining last year's mono box overhaul. The lavish packaging replicates the original 3D cover shot.

Experienced in new crystal clarity half a century later, *TSMR* can be appreciated as a spangled embodiment of that technicolor year and fullest manifestation of Brian's ever-questing sonic spirit, upgrading the psychedelic jam of *Sing This All Together (See What Happens)* from wankered self-indulgence to fearless avant garde exploration. Timeless highlights include the towering clang of *Citadel*, kaleidoscopic love bomb *She's A Rainbow*, eerie *Lantern*, enigmatic *2000 Man* and mind-blowingly desolate *2000 Light Years From Home* (Jagger singing words he wrote while locked up in Brixton nick).

Deep beneath the heady swirls of percussion and lysergic exotica, Keith and piano maestro Nicky Hopkins can be heard working up the scabrous blues-power that would ejaculate *Beggars Banquet* and lead the Stones to inventing modern rock; repositioning *TSMR* as vital stepping stone to their omnipotent next phase.

Kris Needs

Ducks Deluxe

Coast To Coast: The Anthology CHERRY RED

Pub-rock royalty.

For a brief flicker in the early 70s, Ducks Deluxe ruled the pub-rock circuit. Their sweat-soaked energy and straightforward rock'n'roll had no gimmicks attached, nor a discernible image. All these guys wanted to do was get on stage, plug in and take the music and the fans to the limit.

People now often cite the Ducks because various members went on to achieve a higher profile in more successful bands like The Motors and Graham Parker & The Rumour. But this lot should be honoured in their own right. And this three CD box set does exactly that.

Both early Ducks Deluxe albums are here – their self-titled debut from 1974 and *Taxi To The Terminal Zone* the next year – plus EP tracks and the A and B-sides of all their singles. There are also demos, plus 2009 reunion mini album *Box Of Shorts* and live material from a 2012 gig at the Half Moon in Putney.

Here's clear affirmation that Ducks Deluxe were one of the UK's best bands over four decades back, and can still back many others into a corner.

Malcolm Dome

Riot

The Official Bootleg Box Set 1976-1980 HNE RECORDINGS

A live Riot in your home, six times over.

New Yawk hard rawkers Riot were virtually unknown in their hometown but rode the coattails of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal to earn a smidgen of popularity in the UK. They toured here with Sammy Hagar and even managed to snaffle a slot at the very first Castle Donington Monsters Of Rock festival in 1980. That performance is exhumed on one of six live CDs here, the others showcasing gigs at Bristol Colston Hall (with Hagar) and diverse clubs across the USA. The sonics have been mastered from tapes in the collection of the estate of founder member and guitarist, the late Mark Reale. One may well ask the question: why such indulgence for a band that rarely finished above mid-table in the Isthmian League? Riot's early albums such as *Rock City* and *Narita* had a tinny-sounding charm, thanks to their managers'/producers' day jobs making jingles for commercial radio. And they had a slew of slick songs such as *Kick Down The Wall, Tokyo Rose* and *Road Racin'*. But Riot were hardly the mightiest of live acts: dual performances at the Red Foxx club in New Jersey in 1976 have a whiff of shambolicism and are full of cover versions; why, even *MOR '80* is hardly the stuff of legend. This collection will only appeal to the most rabid Riot fan, a curious creature sometimes spotted in the Madagascan jungle and surely one of the world's most endangered species.

Geoff Barton

David Bowie

A New Career In A New Town 1977 – 1982

PARLOPHONE

Third instalment of The Dame's career-spanning box-set series reaches Berlin and beyond.

Atypically audacious rebirth following the snowblind highwire act of *Station To Station*, *Low* was Bowie's punk era-defying masterpiece. A keen contender for the greatest achievement in his career peak-packed decade, inspired by new life in Berlin, but recorded in France, *Low* masterfully fused emotional and psychic desperation with cranky, Eno-assisted, synth-funk pop savvy.

As with the title track of its sequel *Heroes*, Bowie's *Sound And Visionary* pop genius shone through the despair (of which the harrowing anorexic of the *Be My Wife* video was just one striking example).

The Thin White Duke's disappearing act is masterfully effected across both albums in instrumentals (the *Blackstar* foreshadowing *The Subterraneans, Joe The Lion, V-2 Schneider*) that blend jarring dissonance and an otherworldly prayerful calm. *Heroes* deepened the creative alliance with Eno and introduced the inspirationally off-kilter guitar of Robert Fripp.

All the albums, and the odds-and-sods presented on this 11-CD collection are remastered, but only *Lodger*, in a move approved by Bowie before his death, is given a Tony Visconti 2017 remix. This new mix illuminates the giddy mood of experimentalism abroad, a contrast to the intensity of its precursor's, and a band fresh from the tour captured on the exemplary *Stage* (also here), in fine, resourceful fettle.

Originally titled *Happy Accidents*, *Lodger's* exotic and esoteric dabbling is given a new sharpness of detail and brightness, its exploratory zeal pre-empting the world music vogue Eno would explore further with David Byrne and Talking Heads.

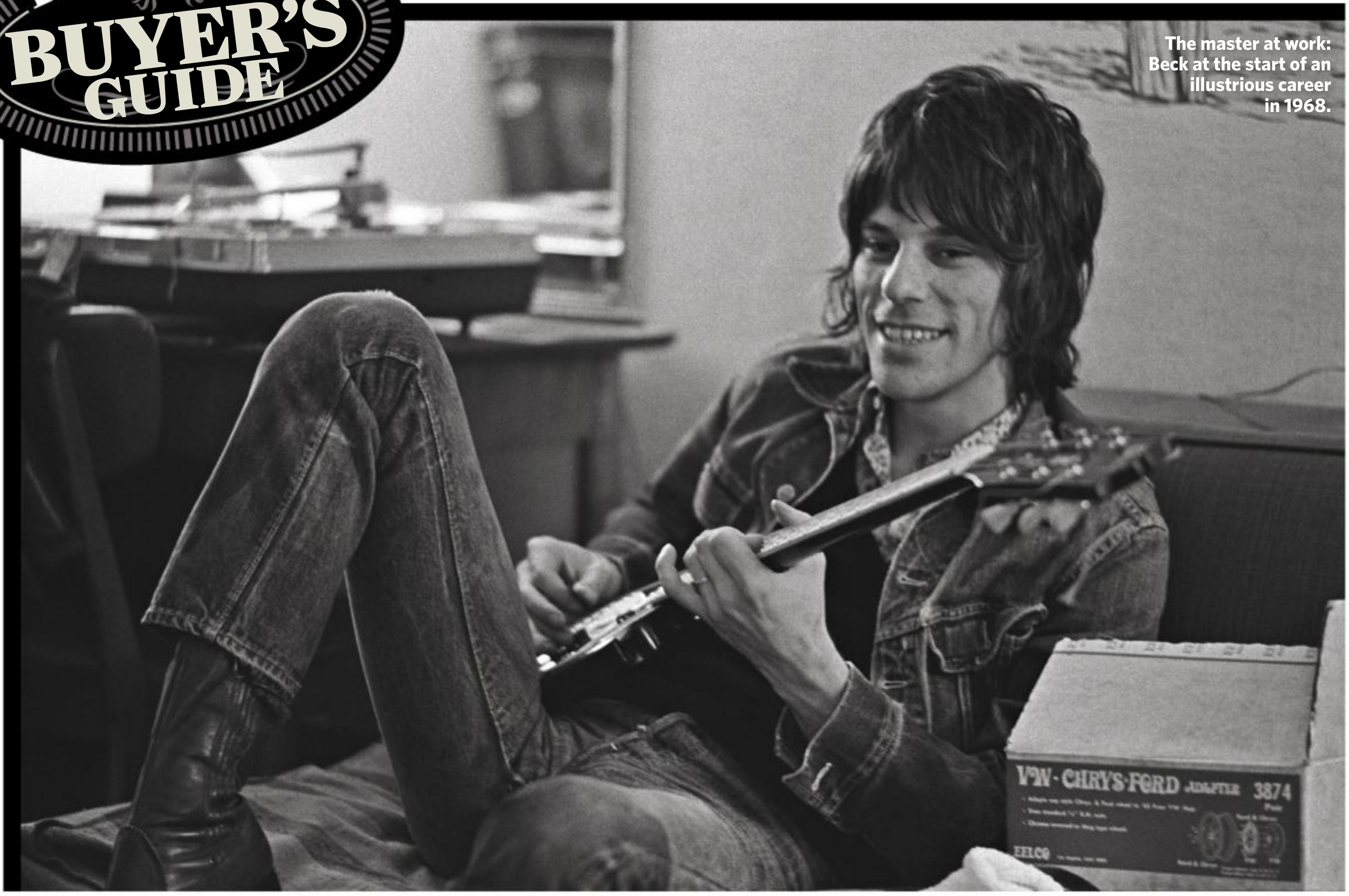
By that time *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* augured in a new era of Bowie. Dismantling past selves with *Ashes To Ashes* and having a pop at the New Romantics that followed in his wake (that *"beep, beep"* lick on *Fashion* surely aimed at Gary Numan).

Arguably the last great Bowie album it also introduced the old-songs-reworked and cover versions formula that would mark the decade ahead. Though with the creative whirlwind that had gone before (and, don't forget, the period captured here also included classic Iggy Pop liaisons *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*) Bowie was surely entitled to cool down the pace.

THE DUFFY ARCHIVE

Gavin Martin

THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE



The master at work: Beck at the start of an illustrious career in 1968.

Jeff Beck

One of the greatest blues-rock/fusion guitarists ever, his solo career spans six decades. Here's where to find the gold.

One of the triumvirate of great British guitarists who came out of The Yardbirds, Jeff Beck arguably had more natural talent than Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page combined. Chris Dreja, the rhythm guitarist in The Yardbirds, who played with all three of them has no doubts.

"Jeff was and is a fucking genius," he says. "The funny thing was that in contrast to Eric, Jeff was totally uncool – except when it came to his guitar playing.

"The other thing about Jeff was that he wasn't very talkative. So it was hard to know what he was thinking. But on stage it was completely different. He'd really come alive and you never quite knew what he was going to do."

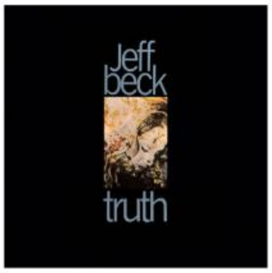
Many of the musicians Beck has worked with since then would echo those sentiments. A mercurial genius, he has never conformed to the conventional image of a guitar hero – except maybe when it comes to looks. Unlike Clapton and Page who attained superstar status by hard graft as much as talent, Beck has repeatedly left or broken up bands before their commercial potential could be fully realised. He restlessly changes style from one album to the next, refusing to be tied down musically. His live performances are intermittent – though seldom short of breathtaking.

The result is that Beck remains third in the trio when it comes to fame – and the double-edged sword of being a household name. Not that it appears to bother him in the slightest. He's not poor and he can certainly indulge in his hobby of restoring classic cars. His instinctive talent is not something that can be produced on demand, and he simply doesn't have the temperament to spend months on the road promoting his wares. As he says: "If you're a painter and you get that close to the picture every day for a week, you get sick of it. But if you leave it for a little bit and then come back to it, the chances are you'll think: 'Wow! Who painted that?'"

The idiosyncratic nature of Beck's musical career – the changes in style, the irregular gaps between albums – mean that it's extremely difficult to compile a definitive buyer's guide; one fan's favourite album may be anathema to another. And most Beck fans are not shy when it comes to having an opinion. But do you think that's going to stop us?

Hugh Fielder

Essential Classics



Truth

EMI, 1968

There's no better way of launching your own career than by loudly eviscerating your past. Jeff Beck's first solo album opens by grinding his Yardbirds hit *Shapes Of Things* into the dirt with a metallic stomp. Rod Stewart's rasping vocals finish the job.

Jeff 'n' Rod were never going to be the Glimmer Twins, but they make excellent sparring partners as they trample all over *Morning Dew, I Ain't Superstitious, Ol' Man River* (really) and *You Shook Me*, the Willie Dixon/JB Lenoir blues standard which Led Zeppelin also recorded for their debut album, released five months later. *Beck's Bolero* is the icing on the cake.

The perfect start to what would become a prestigious solo career.

Blow By Blow

EPIC, 1975

Beck's pivotal fifth album – his first all-instrumental one – takes him towards the world of jazz and fusion, but it's on his own terms as he picks the elements he wants to enhance his own style.

He revels in the sense of adventure from the sleek opening *You Know What I Mean* where he abruptly veers away from a blues-based solo into a more imaginative flight of fancy. There's plenty of tempestuous playing with his sharp, supportive band, particularly on *Scatterbrain*, plus a sublime version of Stevie Wonder's *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* where he draws emotive sighs and moans out of his guitar. And producer George Martin excels himself.

BARON WOLMAN/ATLASICONS.COM

Superior Reputation cementing

Wired

EPIC, 1976

A year after *Blow By Blow*, Beck was back, enthused by the new possibilities and bringing in former Mahavishnu Orchestra members Jan Hammer and Narada Michael Walden who offer a more potent challenge as well as writing most of the tracks.

The result is a tougher, more straight-ahead jazz rock album as Beck deploys his increasing variety of tones and styles to create a greater emotional depth, from the explosive *Led Boots* to the tender acoustic *Love Is Green*. But once again it's a cool cover that lingers longest as Beck's yearning vibrato tugs at the emotions on Charles Mingus's *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*.

There And Back

EPIC , 980

Returning from a four-year break after *Wired*, Beck sticks to the same format with the same blustery enthusiasm, but this time he's backed by two different bands offering a somewhat schizophrenic but no less absorbing take on his fusion style.

On side one he's still going toe-to-toe with keyboard maestro Jan Hammer whose playing ranges from cosmic to disco while Beck doesn't miss a trick. Side two has Tony Hymas on keyboards with drummer Simon Phillips and bassist Mo Foster providing a harder rock backing that allows Beck to blaze away at will on the Latin-flavoured *El Becko* and the turbo-charged *Space Boogie*.

Jeff

EPIC, 2003

Watching rock legends team up with younger, hipper names in the hope of extending their shelf life can be embarrassing. But for Beck it's all part of the quest; to keep himself invigorated. Having toyed with hard-edged techno grooves on his two previous albums, Beck takes the plunge on *Jeff*, bringing in Apollo 440 and experimentalilst David Torn to produce a couple of tracks each.

Apollo 440 add their trademark beats to *Grease Monkey* and *Hot Rod Honeymoon*, while Torn makes a post-modern cross-cultural extravaganza out of *Line Dancing With Monkeys* and *Plan B* which won a Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental.

Performing This Week... Live At Ronnie Scott's

EAGLE ROCK, 2008

Considering how much of Beck's reputation comes from his incendiary live shows, it took a while to capture the magic on tape. But this CD/DVD taken from a week-long residency at London's famous jazz club made the wait worthwhile. If the impetuosity of youth is missing, the range of his awesome talent is displayed comprehensively.

The set covers Beck's entire career. There are guest spots from Eric Clapton and vocalists Imogen Heap and Joss Stone, and some unexpected covers including a haunting version of The Beatles' *A Day In The Life*.

Good Worth exploring

Who Else!

EPI, 1999

Beck's first venture into electronic music got mixed reviews at the time, but it has grown in stature since the novelty of the experiment faded, leaving just the music. On *Who Else!* Beck pits his wits against the techno sounds and rhythms of his longtime keyboard player Tony Hymas and is driven on by the ferocious two-handed tapping of fellow fusion guitarist Jennifer Batten.

The diet of beats takes on a hypnotic quality at times regardless of the variety of tempos, but the same cannot be said of Beck's playing, which blazes away regardless, pausing only to indulge in the live *Brush With The Blues* and the dreamy Irish folk song *Declan*.

Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop

EPIC, 1989

Following a lacklustre excursion into pop-rock on his mid-80s album *Flash*, Beck gets back to business in the company of Tony Hymas and ex-Zappa drummer Terry Bozzio. And the range of material he tackles on what became a Grammy-winning album for Best Instrumental Rock is as diverse as he gets.

There's the lilting Caribbean rhythms of *Behind The Veil*, the smoking blues of *Big Block*, the fiercely rocking *Stand On It*, the funky *A Day In The House*, the moody *Two Rivers*, the ambient *Where Were You* and the final locked-in groove of *Sling Shot*. Needless to say Beck takes them all in his stride.

Crazy Legs

EPIC, 1993

Even a genius has to be allowed an occasional indulgence, and in Beck's case it's a homage to Gene Vincent's guitarist from his Blue Caps band, the brilliantly understated and criminally underrated Cliff Gallup. Beck has always cited him as a major influence, which seems strangely odd at first, as he rarely plays rockabilly himself.

He makes up for it here, though, with 18 tracks from Vincent's peerless catalogue with Gallup, performed straight and unadorned in the company of British rockabilly maestros the Big Town Playboys. Beck is not about to mess with his hero but, capricious as ever, he leaves out *Be-Bop-A-Lula*.

Avoid

Emotion And Commotion

ATCO, 2010

There are Jeff Beck fans who claim that he has never made an avoidable album, but this return from a seven-year break could be described as superfluous. The lush production by Trevor Horn wreaks of an ulterior motive – the dinner-jazz audience maybe? And you have to question the wisdom of a 64-piece orchestra on a Jeff Beck album.

It starts well with a poignant *Corpus Christi* (based on Jeff Buckley's version) followed by a rousing *Hammerhead*. But it soon sinks into a strange ambivalence, and it's hard to believe Beck chose to cover *Over The Rainbow*, *Lilac Wine* or *Nessun Dorma* of his own free will.

Essential Playlist

Beck's Bolero
Truth

Shapes Of Things
Truth

Spanish Boots
Beck-Ola

Black Cat Moan
Beck Bogert Appice

Scatterbrain
Blow By Blow

Cause We've Ended As Lovers
Blow By Blow

Led Boots
Wired

Goodbye Pork Pie Hat
Wired

The Pump
There And Back

El Becko
There And Back

Big Block
Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop

Where Were You
Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop

Hi Heel Sneakers
Frankie's House

Race With The Devil
Crazy Legs

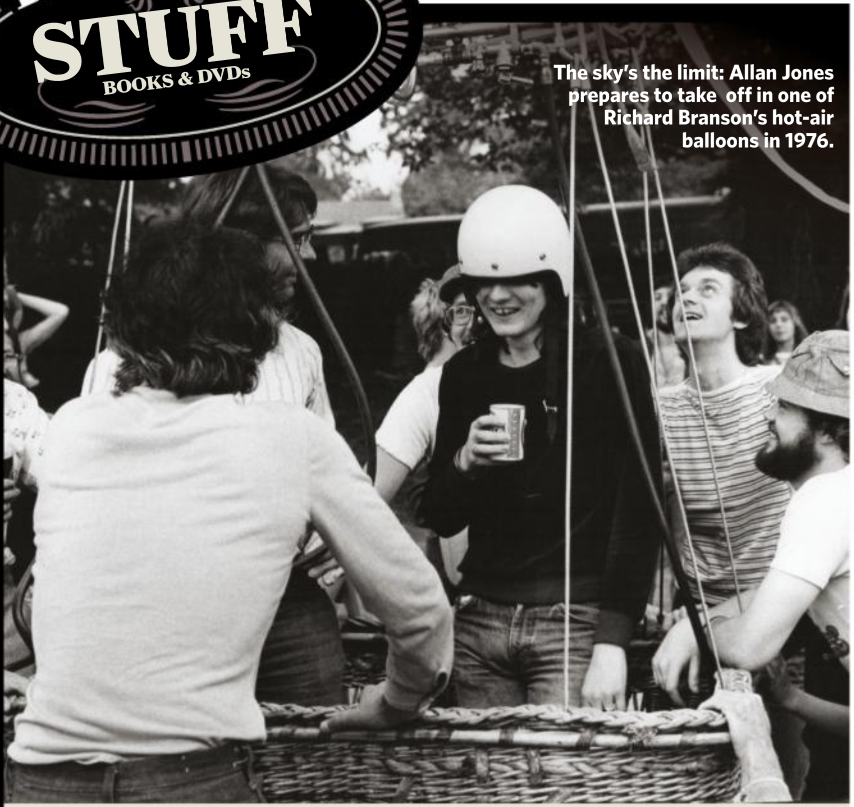
Brush With The Blues
Who Else!

Earthquake
You Had It Coming

Plan B
Jeff

A Day In The Life
Performing This Week... Live At Ronnie Scotts

The Hard Stuff — Books & DVDs



The sky's the limit: Allan Jones prepares to take off in one of Richard Branson's hot-air balloons in 1976.

Can't Stand Up For Falling Down

Allan Jones BLOOMSBURY

Former *Melody Maker* editor's collected war stories. You've got to laugh – really.

"*Melody Maker* needs a bullet up the arse," read Allan Jones's job application. "I'm the gun. Pull the trigger."

There are certain rock journalist's war stories that have long-since passed into folklore. They come up in the pub regularly, they're of indeterminate origin, some are so finely tooled and unlikely that they're suspected to be the stuff of urban myth. Never ascribed to any particular storyteller, they're effectively in the public domain. Well, not only does it turn out that they all actually happened but, incredible as it might seem, they all actually happened to Allan Jones.

I really should have guessed. After all, back in the day I'd often bear eager earwitness as Jones regaled assorted rapscallions from the inkie press, the PR community and beyond with assorted side-splitting anecdotes from his years on *Melody Maker*'s frontline, over generous libations in the upstairs bar of London SE1's Stamford Arms.

Many of these priceless reminiscences have appeared in print before but, newly fine-tuned and sometimes expanded, my God they stand retelling.

From its introduction onward it soon becomes clear that as rock history was being made, more often than not Allan Jones was either grinning manfully on the sidelines while in the grip of a fearful hangover, or at the very heart of the drunken action as a trusted confidant.

As packed with hilarity as they are insight, Jones's moreish tales (of which there are over 70) can have a cumulative effect if read in rapid succession. On a recent train journey I had to briefly set the book aside for fear of treating my fellow passengers to the sight of me arfing like a performing seal at a particularly vivid recollection of John Martyn beating up Paul Kossoff. More fisticuffs ensue during what's widely regarded to be Jones's 'greatest hit': Lou Reed's public slapping of David Bowie in '79. Elsewhere, we've the Sex Pistols being stopped and searched on the Kings Road, Ozzy Osbourne pissing on The Alamo, Dr. Feelgood, Joe Strummer, Alex Harvey, Lemmy, Ray Davies and Jones advising Sting (just starting out in The Police) to abandon the folly of a musical career for which he clearly has no aptitude, and return to teaching.

As rock memoirs go, this was only ever going to be an essential classic.

Ian Fortnam

Alice Cooper

Welcome To My Nightmare: Special Edition

EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT

Dream evil.

As far as career landmarks go, *Welcome To My Nightmare* remains one of the best things Alice Cooper has ever done, the cunning combination of shock-rock and Broadway pizzazz spawning a classic with plenty of theatrical potential.

The 1976 *Welcome To My Nightmare* concert film, shot in London, is a bit of a cult favourite, capturing a show perfectly tuned to insidiously slipping *Cold Ethyl, Steven* and *Devil's Food* further into the mainstream. What makes this Special Edition really worthwhile, though, is the inclusion of 1975's rarely seen *Alice Cooper: The Nightmare* TV special on DVD for the first time. Featuring Vincent Price camping it up like a champion as the spirit of the nightmare and leading Alice around on a leash before *The Black Widow*, this every-expense-spared dip into the horror dressing up box looks deliciously cheap, but delivers the entire album plus a nifty version of the *Ballad Of Dwight Fry*. Tacky but brilliant fun.

Essi Berelian

Dead Boys 1977: The Lost Photographs Of Dave Treat

Dave Treat SELF-PUBLISHED

Unearthed old photos show a legendary band pre-fame.

Back in 1977, when Cleveland's legendary snot-punks the Dead Boys were still shaking off their glammy Dolls rip-off roots, then-fledgling art student Dave Treat agreed to shoot promo photos for the band amid the rust and decay of Cleveland's economically strapped mean streets. Only one photo from that session, shot in grainy black and white, actually made publication. The rest remained unseen. Until now.

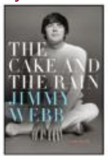
Also including a smattering of live shots from the same era, this remarkable book shows this now legendary band at the cusp of infamy. The ripped clothes and fresh flesh wounds of their CBGB days had yet to kick in, but you can see it all staring at you through Treat's lo-fi, monochrome lens, the dystopian future of punk rock slumming it in the Midwest, ready to throttle the world. Kinda amazing what 40 years can do for a shoebox full of dusty old photographs.

Sleazegrinder

The Cake And The Rain

Jimmy Webb OMNIBUS PRESS

Genius songwriter writes eyebrow-raising memoir.



Now revered as one of the great songwriters, the man behind *MacArthur Park, Wichita Lineman* and countless others was, as he first soared, mocked as a mainstream "square". A sensitive type, he hated that, believing his hallucinatory lyrics were just as out-there as those of The Beatles or the Stones. Perhaps he overcompensated. Glen Campbell's first words to him were: "Get a haircut."

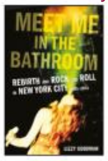
In this very colourful, candid memoir, Webb reveals that he really was a rock'n'roll wild man. One night of drink, drugs and chaos with Harry Nilsson and John Lennon left him in a coma, after which he had to re-learn the piano all over again. Tales of egomania, debauchery and a complex love life are matched by insights into his craft and the industry's workings, and there's some Olympic-standard A-list name-dropping. Arch anecdotes, beautiful prose. There won't be a better music-related book this year.

Chris Roberts

Meet Me In The Bathroom

Lizzy Goodman FABER

New York's literary skyline gets a spectacular 21st-century landmark.



While we've been saturated with accounts of New York's Warhol and CBGB eras, 21st-century developments remained unchronicled until this monolithic new work by journalist Lizzy Goodman, who used an oral history approach and interviewed more than 200 main players, musicians, writers, DJs and scenesters.

The story starts with The Strokes, New York's last great rock band, whose career followed the common arc of meteoric rise followed by drugs-and-booze ruin, then

ROD LYNTON

weaves Yeah Yeah Yeahs, LCD Soundsystem, White Stripes, Interpol, The Killers, Kings Of Leon, Vampire Weekend and more into 600 riveting pages. New York remains the lead character; sanitised by its Prohibition-style 90s crackdown, changed forever by 9/11 (the book's most gripping section) then the internet as the Lower East Side is swallowed by gentrification, leading to today's flourishing Brooklyn scene.

The endless hard drugs, flowing booze, high-jinks debauchery and business shenanigans show that nothing really changes, whichever era you're following.

Kris Needs

Some Weird Sin – On Tour With Iggy Pop

Alvin Gibbs CADIZ

Instinctively Iggy.

Having joined his band ex-UK Subs bassist Alvin Gibbs spent nine months playing alongside his hero on the *Instinct* world tour in '88. This candid account of his adventures has a ring of authenticity to it. There are regular bouts of sex and drugs, especially after a show with Guns 'N Roses, although nothing that would cause a Led Zep roadie to raise an eyebrow. Iggy himself does not participate apart from one memorable occasion, but then he's already been there, and Gibbs keeps a close and descriptive eye on his boss who has learnt to control his volatile nature off stage while cutting loose every night on it.

Amid the mind-numbing 230-date schedule, there's a strangely tense encounter with David Bowie and a more dramatic encounter with Pepsi Cola who are sponsoring two New Zealand shows. Final score: 1–1.

Hugh Fielder

Rolling Stones: On Air In The Sixties

Richard Havers VIRGIN

Broadcasting the blues: the official TV tie-in.

It feels like the Rolling Stones have always been with us, manning a ludicrously immense and imperious rock'n'roll machine they somehow fell into. It would fit the myth perfectly to reveal that the we-piss-anywhere Stones built rock in their image. That they emerged into a repressed society ripe for a taste of libertine excess as five purpose-built dionysian dandies.

Years of rock press would have us believe the Stones simply sat and dictated the rock gospel, contrived the entire genre, lifestyle and attitude as if tossing off another chart-topping nursery rhyme of misogyny, and then casually proceeded to transcend it. But tried and trusted Stones chronicler Richard Havers's *On Air* provides a peek behind the media-constructed fantasy into the monochrome nuts 'n' bolts of the band's 1960s, charting their rise from radio sessions, through TV clips to *Stones In The Park* epiphany.

The painstakingly researched minutiae of the text, the grounding evidence of humdrum paperwork facsimiles, strip away much of the legend, but the photographs are the gold. Here are five lads who appear to have no clue where they're going, how they got where they are or even what they should be wearing. There's a lot of bafflement, but a fair few grins. *On Air* sees the Stones slip the leash of their legend to reacquaint us with the ingenuous vulnerability, humility and humanity that originally rocketed them to stardom.

Ian Fortnam

Black Sabbath

The End Of The End

Brummie icons' grand farewell, on stage and off.

Black Sabbath's tumultuous, triumphant 50-year journey finally reached its end earlier this year with a bittersweet hometown show at the old Birmingham NEC. *The End Of The End*, one part concert film, one part documentary, captures that living wake. The big-budget live footage captures the tangible levels of emotion swirling around the band and the audience (anyone who thinks they never need to hear *War Pigs* again should clock the titanic version here). There's gold in the off-stage footage: Ozzy blasting a harmonica on a rehearsal room blast through *The Wizard*, or the band musing on their friendship with estranged drummer Bill Ward.

"Well, chaps, thanks for coming," Ozzy tells Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler at the death of it all. "Now fuck off." If they really are dead and gone, this makes a fine headstone.

Dave Everley

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CLASSIC ROCK

LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P*114*

Megadeth

One of thrash's original Big Four. Making a gloriously apocalyptic racket at Bloodstock.

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KEVIN NIXON

"There won't be extraneous props in the show. We're going to try to get away with pure showmanship."

Sparks

The art-pop veterans, with "a really exciting band", tour the UK in September.

SPARKS STATS

★ Sparks were formed in Los Angeles in 1972.
★ In 2015 they formed the supergroup FFS with Franz Ferdinand.
★ The just-released *Hippopotamus* is their twenty-fourth album.

Since exploding into 1974's glam zeitgeist with the hit single *This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us*, Ron and Russell Mael have maintained a tireless forward momentum across rock's most ingenious and instantly recognisable albums. Their latest, *Hippopotamus*, is also one of their best.

Can we expect all the usual audiovisual bells and whistles on this tour?

Russell Mael: This time we have a really exciting band playing with us, so there won't be extraneous props in the show. We're going to try to get away with pure showmanship.

How do you go about maintaining prime vocal condition?

Russell: You must take care of yourself for the people coming to your shows. You cannot allow yourself to aim for vocals that are less than perfect or less than the way people know they should sound. It's my obligation that songs from *Kimono My House* [1974] sound as they should, and we're proud that we still do everything in its original key.

It's sometimes easier to find parallels with what you do in the art world than in the rock milieu. Your instantly recognisable public image is reminiscent of Gilbert and George.

Russell: Yeah. I appreciate the analogy. You can't separate their persona from the actual work they do, and it's similar with Ron and me.

Ron: That lack of separation from the way they present themselves and their work has a similarity. You can't cut yourself off from the image they present and what they're doing. When we started, we thought image and visuals enhanced rather than detracted from the music. We'd studied visual arts at university; we didn't study music. I studied graphic design, and Russell cinema.

Your use of repetition sometimes transcends traditional pop hooks – *Hippopotamus* is almost a sonic equivalent to Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe screen-prints.

Ron: That's an interesting observation. We became aware of that repetition around the time of *Lil Beethoven* [2002]. We were listening to a lot of hip-hop, and minimalist composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich, and realised that at a certain point, when it's obvious it's repetition, repetition ceases being boring and starts making an emphatic statement.

Everything about Sparks is a challenge: there are always more lyrics than fit comfortably; songs are invariably written in a key that takes Russell to the top of his range; suddenly Ron's playing piano with a pair of six-foot false arms; or you're playing twenty-one albums across twenty-one successive nights. These are challenges more readily associated with competitive sport than with pop music.

Russell: With my role and duties it's almost like a sport. You have to train for it and there's a focus and discipline that's similar to athletics.

Ron: [Laughing] When very young, before becoming a band, we both competed in sports. While half the appeal was the enjoyment of doing the sport, the other half was the attention you were getting, so that still figures in what we're doing. We're competitive people generally: competing against our past and trying to move beyond the lethargy in much of what's being done around us, so there's an element of sport in all we do.

What's your most essential backstage rider requirement?

Russell: We've ordered an industrial-sized bottle of hand sanitiser. In order to be able to touch anything on the rider food-wise, you've got to have your bottle of hand sanitiser or you're in deep trouble. **IF**

The tour concludes in London on September 28.

The Pineapple Thief

The band play more dates to promote *Your Wilderness.*

Formed as a 'bedroom band' by vocalist/guitarist Bruce Soord in 1999, the Pineapple Thief now have 11 albums to their name. Soord checks in ahead of the upcoming tour.

In 2012 you spoke to *Classic Rock* about getting used to TPT belatedly becoming a touring band. Since then progress has been good – on the last tour you headlined venues such as Islington's Assembly Hall.
Yeah. Our first gig was in a skittle alley, so it's pretty amazing that we're still taking those leaps forward.

An early notable catalyst arrived when you noticed a queue gathering for non-existent merch when the band opened for Caravan in 1999.
[Laughing] Yeah. Luckily I had some CDs in the car. That's when I began to realise that this thing had legs.

Is that journey reflected in the story behind the current album, last year's *Your Wilderness*?
Yeah. This band doesn't take anything for granted, but nobody knows what's around the corner and that's very exciting.

Will you be playing *Your Wilderness* in its entirety on this leg of the tour?
Last time we missed out one song, *Where We Stood*, but on these dates you'll hear everything. Incidentally, *Where We Stood* is also the title of a Blu-ray that we have coming out.

Can you tell us about that?
It has the Islington show, which was our biggest yet and we sold it out. There are tons of extras, and the *Eight Years Later* album, which was only available on the special edition of *Your Wilderness*.

This tour is billed as The Pineapple Thief Featuring Gavin Harrison. Is the ex-Porcupine Tree/current King Crimson drummer an occasional band member or a special guest?
Gavin played on *Your Wilderness* and we convinced him to tour. I know that he's up for doing the next album, but for now we're very happy to shout about having one of the best drummers in the world. **DL**

The last date of the tour is in Bristol on September 17.

Kentucky Headhunters

After their belated first UK visit last year, they're back in October.

Last summer, at the behest of Black Stone Cherry, Kentucky Headhunters toured Europe for the very first time. Rhythm guitarist/singer Richard Young, father of BSC's John Fred, previews a second visit from the southern rock band.

After the tour was a success, did the Black Stone Cherry lads say: "We told you so"?
Oh, we heard that a thousand times [laughs]. Getting to see my son's band headline the Ramblin' Man Fair and for the Headhunters to play with them there was a real shot in the arm for us, too.

By that point the Headhunters had existed in one form or another for forty-eight years, and you were sixty. Did you have to pinch yourself?
I sure did. My problem was a fear of flying, but I got over that. But looking back on it now, had we made the journey earlier, it probably wouldn't have been as fulfilling or life-enriching. That's why we're coming back on our own, without Black Stone Cherry to lean on, and that's very exciting.

Kentucky Headhunters' current album, *On Safari*, was recorded in just three days following the death of your father. You've suggested that a "higher spirit" was at work.
There's no doubt about it. Losing my dad was such a shock to myself and my brother Fred [drummer with the Headhunters] because he was the patriarch of the family. Making the record was a healing process, and for the whole band it felt as though he was there looking over our shoulders.

> **"We let the audience pick the set. We can almost read their minds."**

A vinyl edition of *On Safari* will be available for these dates.
Yeah, that's gonna be great. Waiting for vinyl to be manufactured is like waiting for a baby to arrive. We're so happy that people love vinyl again.

Will we be hearing a lot of the songs on *On Safari* on this tour?
Oh, absolutely. We'll probably do at least four of those songs. But after so many albums, it's tough to squeeze it all in. We have album cuts that are as popular as our hits. That's a great problem to have, but it brings a certain pressure.

And you're not really a band for sticking to set-lists, are you?
[Laughs] No sir. We stopped using a song-list fifteen years ago. There are four or five favourites that must be played, but we let the audience pick the set. After so many years we can almost read their minds.

Kentucky Headhunters are among southern rock's last men standing. Taking Black Stone Cherry out of the equation, do you fear for the genre's long-term future?
Naaaw. We can never go back to 1971 and the days of the Allman Brothers and Wet Willie, but a whole bunch of young people still like that music, and if they're nineteen now, they'll still be listening to it when they're sixty. **DL**

The tour begins in Bilston on October 2.

Tigertailz

There'll be plenty of oldies and nostalgia at a special gig in Nottingham.

Guitarist Jay Pepper checks in as the Welsh glam-metallers commemorate the passing of their co-founding bassist Pepsi Tate (inset, above) with a one-off charity gig at the Rescue Rooms in Nottingham.

Does it seem like a decade ago that Pepsi Tate passed away?
We've just pulled together a video for *Fall In Love Again* from our first album, and most of the available footage was quite old – my God, how the illness [pancreatic cancer] decimated him. So no, I can't really believe it.

Tell us about the Pepsi you knew.
He was bombastic and full of life, a pleasure to be around. He only had forty-two years but he filled them to the brim. Pepsi and I shared a very silly sense of humour, but he was also very motivated and fun to be with. A really explosive character.

Outside of rock'n'roll, under his real name, Justin Smith, Tate worked for BBC Wales and directed a weekly politics programme called *Dragon's Eye*.
Yeah, all of us did different things once the band fizzled out [in 1996]. Pepsi went into video production. He was sharp-edged and creative and he applied that to everything he did. Whenever we did an album, Pepsi would write more songs and lyrics than anyone else.

As the son of *Dempsey & Makepeace* actor Ray Smith (who played Chief Superintendent Gordon Spikings) could he be 'showbizzy' at times?
He had a bit of an ego [laughs]. In the video for *Love Bomb Baby* [1990], Kim [Hooker, frontman] looks at him as if to say: "Let someone else get into the shot." It was like being in a boxing ring – but not in a malicious way.

> **"I think Pepsi would have at least admired our persistence."**

Would Pepsi be shocked to learn that, a decade on, Tigertailz still exist and are into their thirty-fourth year?
Of course he would. I've had lots of criticism for the many line-up changes, and there were times when it all became a bit of a car crash, but that's what happens when you lose key members. With the last album [*Shoot To Kill*, 2016] we went back to the big production thing, and I know that he'd have loved that.

Given the upcoming special show's significance, will it feature more oldies than usual?
Yeah, we'll be pulling out tunes that were either written by Pepsi or that he had a great allegiance to. It'll be a very warm evening.

Might there be any special guest appearances on the night?
I doubt it. I don't have much to do with Steevi [Jaimz, singer], Ace [Finchum, drummer] lives in America and I haven't spoken to Kim since he left the band five years ago.

What's next for Tigertailz in the grand scheme of things?
How much longer we can go on I really don't know. But I think Pepsi would have at least admired our persistence against the odds. **DL**

An Evening For Pepsi takes place on September 16.

Focus

The prog veterans round off 2017 at Hard Rock Hell Prog.

Singer, Hammond organist, flautist and yodeller Thijs van Leer sets the scene for the Dutch band's latest UK tour.

Focus recently appeared at the Ramblin' Man Fair. Was it a good experience for you?
Yes, it was great. What a reaction! It was just beautiful. We also had good weather.

A double album called *The Focus Family Album* that combines band material and two solo tracks by each current member is about to be released. How was it compiled?
We had full direction over it, we chose the tracks ourselves and we are happy that it's coming out. It has some old and new tracks, so it's a nice mixture.

Udo Pannekeet recently became the newest Focus bassist. Why did the band cheekily "congratulate" themselves on his appointment?
That's because Udo is an extraordinary bass player. He was recommended to us. I called him up and asked whether he was willing to be in the band and he said yes.

Do you ever tire of playing your seventies golden oldies *Hocus Pocus* and *Sylvia*?
No. The thought of not playing them would never occur to me. I still love them both, the audiences want to hear them, there's no friction of any kind.

Is there a studio album of new material on the way?
Yes, we are making plans for *Focus 11* and then *Focus 12*.

Assuming the band still exist in 2019, it will mark their fiftieth anniversary. That's quite an achievement.
Yes, it would be quite remarkable, and we are having many thoughts about ways of commemorating such a milestone.

If guitarist Jan Akkerman, bassist Martin Dresden and drummer Pierre van der Linden – the original line-up, as near as dammit – were agreeable to doing something very special, would you be up for that?
It would be interesting, but as things stand, it's still an open question. **DL**

Focus tour the UK from October 5 to 21 and play Hard Rock Hell Prog on November 17.

TIGERTAILZ: ALEX RUFFINI; FOCUS: RENS PLASCHEK

Tour Dates

RYAN ADAMS

Manchester	Apollo	Sep 14
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 15
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 17
Leeds	Academy	Sep 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Sep 19
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 21
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 22

AIRBOURNE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 10
Bristol	Academy	Nov 11
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 13
Manchester	Academy	Nov 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 15
Norwich	UEA	Nov 18
Oxford	Academy	Nov 19
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 22

ALTER BRIDGE & THE PARALLAX ORCHESTRA

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 2, 3

ANATHEMA

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 22
Belfast	Limelight	Sep 23
Dublin	Academy	Sep 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 26
Sheffield	The Plug	Sep 27
Bristol	Marble Factory	Sep 28
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Sep 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 30

BAD TOUCH, MOLLIE MARRIOTT

Sheffield	Plug	Nov 9
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Nov 10
Bristol	Tunnels	Nov 16
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Nov 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 18
Nottingham	Bodega	Nov 19
Glasgow	Stereo	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 24
Coventry	Empire	Nov 25
London	Islington Academy	Nov 26
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Dec 1
Southampton	Talking Heads	Dec 2
Trecco Bay Planet Rockstock Festival		Dec 3

DAN BAIRD & HOMEMADE SIN

Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 7
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 8
Glasgow	ABC2	Nov 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Nov 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 11
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 12

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Stockton-On-Tees	The ARC	Nov 2
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 3
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Nov 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 5
Preston	Guildhall	Nov 6

BIG BIG TRAIN

London	Cadogan Hall	Sep 29, 30, Oct 1

BIG BOY BLOATER & THE LIMITS

Aldershot	West End Centre	Sep 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Sep 22
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 23
Newbury	Arlington Arts	Sep 30
Nottingham	The Maze	Oct 5
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 6
Preston	Continental	Oct 7
Birmingham	Dark Horse	Oct 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 12
Darlington	The Forum	Oct 13

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jan 2
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 4

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Dublin	Academy	Oct 23
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 24
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy	Oct 27
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 28
Leeds	Academy	Oct 30
Brighton	Dome	Oct 31
Bristol	Academy	Nov 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 3
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 4

BLACK STAR RIDERS, TAX THE HEAT, BLUES PILLS, DIRTY THRILLS

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Nov 8
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Nov 9
Warrington	Parr Hall	Nov 10
Hull	University	Nov 12
Middlesbrough	Empire	Nov 14
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 15
Leicester	Academy	Nov 16
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 18
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Nov 19

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
NIGHTWISH, GOJIRA, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 9-12

BLUESFEST
STEELY DAN, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS, GOV'T MULE, CHRIS ISAAC, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Oct 27-29

BLUESFEST DUBLIN
STEELY DAN, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 29

JOE BONAMASSA

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 9
Manchester	Arena	Mar 10
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Mar 11
Aberdeen	GE Oil & Gas Centre	Mar 13
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 14
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Mar 16
Brighton	Centre	Mar 17

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 11
London	Shoreditch Old Blue Last	Oct 13
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Oct 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 20
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 21
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 23
Birmingham	Academy 3	Oct 30
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Nov 27
Brighton	Prince Albert	Nov 29
Bristol	Thekla	Dec 8
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Dec 9, 10

THE CADILLAC THREE, BROTHERS OSBORNE

Belfast	Mandela Hall	Nov 9
Cardiff	Y Plas	Nov 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 14
Norwich	UEA	Nov 15
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 17
Manchester	Academy	Nov 18
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 19
Glasgow	ABC	Nov 20

Recommended

CATS IN SPACE

London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 13, 27
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 12
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 15
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 16
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 17
Brighton	The Haunt	Sep 19
Glasgow	G2	Sep 25
Manchester	Academy 3	Sep 26

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

MAX & IGGOR CAVALERA RETURN TO ROOTS, OVER KILL, INSOMNIUM, DESERTED FEAR

London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 12

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Bournemouth	BIC	Sep 24
Manchester	Arena	Sep 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 28
London	O2 Arena	Sep 30

CLITHEROE BLUES FESTIVAL
BERNIE MARSDEN, DR FEELGOOD, DANNY BRYANT, MORE

Clitheroe The Grand		Oct 15

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO, ALAN LANCASTER

Minehead	Butlins Quo Convention	Oct 13-16
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 2
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Dec 3

ALICE COOPER, THE MISSION, THE TUBES

First Direct	Arena	Nov 11
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 12
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 15
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 16

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BLACK STAR RIDERS

Out from under the deep shadow of Thin Lizzy and doin' their own thang, here's a band with a killer instinct and top tunes.

See this page for dates, currently Nov 8-19.

CRADLE OF FILTH

Belfast	Limelight	Oct 30
Dublin	Academy	Oct 31
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 2
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 3
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 4
Leeds	Church	Nov 5
Oxford	Academy	Nov 7
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 8
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 9
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 10
Bristol	Bierkeller	Nov 11

THE DARKNESS

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 23
Manchester	Academy 1	Nov 24
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Nov 25
Leeds	Academy	Nov 27
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 28
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Victoria Hall	Dec 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 2
Norwich	UEA	Dec 3
Guildford	G Live	Dec 5
Margate	Winter Gardens	Dec 6
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Dec 7
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 10
Brighton	Dome	Dec 11
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Dec 13
Bristol	Colston Hall	Dec 14

THE DEAD KENNEDYS

Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Oct 12
London	Islington Academy	Oct 13, 14

DEEP PURPLE, EUROPE

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 17
Manchester	Arena	Nov 18
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 22
London	O2 Arena	Nov 23

DELAIN, MARCO HIETALA

London	Camden Koko	Nov 1

DIAMOND HEAD

Dublin	Fibber McGee's	Nov 23
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Nov 24
Limerick	Dolans Warehouse	Nov 25
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 30
Edinburgh	La Belle Angèle	Dec 1
Sheffield	HRH Festival	Dec 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 7
Southampton	1865 Club	Dec 8

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Dublin	Bluesfest	Oct 28
London	Bluesfest	Oct 29
York	Barbican	Oct 31
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 4

DRAGONFORCE

Glasgow	Garage	Oct 4
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 5
York	Fibbers	Oct 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 7
Manchester	Sound Control	Oct 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	Oct 11
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 14
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 15

ELECTRIC BOYS

Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 26
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 27
Glasgow	ABC 2	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 29
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 30
Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 3
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 4

ENSLAVED

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 24

THE FLAMING GROOVIES

Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Sep 19
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 20
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Sep 21

FOCUS

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 5
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 7
Oswestry	Lion Quays Hotel	Oct 8
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 10
Ayr	Gaiety Theatre	Oct 11
Glasgow	The Ferry	Oct 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 13
Wigan	Old Courts	Oct 14
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 18
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 19
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Oct 20, 21

FOO FIGHTERS

London	O2 Arena	Sep 19

HENRIK FREISCHLADER

Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 19
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 20
Glasgow	ABC	Sep 21
Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 22
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 23
Brighton	Komedia	Sep 24

FROST*

London	Camden Dingwalls	Nov 24

ERIC GALES

Dublin	Whelan's	Oct 24
Limerick	Dolans Warehouse	Oct 25
Cork	Cyprus Ave	Oct 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 27
Bournemouth	Mr Kyps	Oct 29
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Oct 31
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 2

GOOD CHARLOTTE

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 28
Glasgow Barrowland		Nov 30

KEVIN NIXON

LIVE!

Birmingham	Academy	Dec 1
Manchester	Academy	Dec 2
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 3

GOV'T MULE

Dublin	Academy	Oct 22
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 27
London	O2 Arena Bluesfest	Oct 28

HARD ROCK HELL DOOM VS STONER
MY DYING BRIDE, ORANGE GOBLIN, KADAVAR, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 30/Oct 1

BETH HART

Leeds	Town Hall	Oct 30
Bath	Forum	Nov 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Sep 18
Guildford	G Live	Sep 19
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Sep 20
Barnstaple	Queen's Hall	Sep 22
Worthing	Assembly Halls	Sep 23
Weston Super Mare	Playhouse	Sep 25
Hull	City Hall	Sep 27
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Sep 28
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 1
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 2
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 5
St Albans	Arena	Oct 6

HELLOWEEN'S PUMPKINS UNITED

London	Brixton Academy	Nov 14

ILFRACOMBE BLUES FESTIVAL
THE BLUES BAND, THE PRETTY THINGS, SNAKECHARMER, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 10-12

ILFRACOMBE PUNK FESTIVAL
RUTS DC, 999, DISCHARGE, REZILLOS, LURKERS, SHAM 69, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 17-19

INGLORIOUS

Pontipridd	Uni Arts Centre	Sep 30
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 1
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 3
Dublin	Academy	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 6
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 7
Newcastle	Academy 2	Oct 8
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 10
York	Fibbers	Oct 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 20

INSANE CLOWN POSSE, MUSHROOMHEAD

Glasgow	ABC	Nov 15
Bristol	Academy	Nov 16
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 17
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 18
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 19

WILKO JOHNSON, JOHN COOPER CLARKE

London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 26

KADAVAR

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Sep 30

THE KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS, BAD TOUCH

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 3
Sheffield	Local Authority	Oct 5
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 6
London	Boston Music Rooms	Oct 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 9
Glasgow	ABC2	Oct 10

THE KILLERS

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Nov 6
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Nov 10
Manchester	Arena	Nov 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 19
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 20
Aberdeen	GE Arena	Nov 21
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 23
Sheffield	Arena	Nov 25
London	O2 Arena	Nov 27, 28

KING KING – RESCHEDULED DATES

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jan 17
Birmingham	Town Hall	Jan 18

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

THE CADILLAC THREE

With new third album *Legacy* just off the presses, the already highly rated southern rock trio will be out to impress.

See previous page for dates, currently Nov 9-20.

Bath	Forum	Jan 20
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Jan 26
Sheffield	Leadmill	Jan 27

LAIBACH

London	Islington Academy	Nov 23

L.A. GUNS

London	Camden Underworld	Nov 2, 4

MARK LANEGAN BAND

Bristol	Trinity	Nov 27
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Nov 29
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 30
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 1
Aberdeen	Garage	Dec 3
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Dec 4
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Dec 5
Dublin	Academy	Dec 6
Leeds	Church	Dec 8
Oxford	Academy	Dec 9
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 10
Brighton	Concorde 2	Dec 11
London	Camden Koko	Dec 12

THE LEMON TWIGS

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 10
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 11
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 12
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 15

LIFE OF AGONY, AARON BUCHANAN & THE CULT CLASSICS

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 15
Manchester	Gorilla	Sep 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 18
Newcastle	Institute	Sep 19
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 20
Birmingham	Institute 2	Sep 21
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Sep 23

Recommended

LIVING COLOUR, STONE BROKEN

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 27
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 29
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 30
London	Malet Street ULU	Oct 1
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 4
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Oct 6
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 7

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

LYNCH MOB

Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 10
London	Islington Academy	Nov 12

ERJA LYYTINEN

Sheffield	The Greystones	Sep 20
Edinburgh	The Caves	Sep 21
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 22
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 23
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 24
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 25
Bristol	The Tunnels	Sep 26

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 12
London	Palladium	Nov 7
Manchester	Academy	Nov 8

IMELDA MAY

Warrington	Parr Hall	Nov 13
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Nov 14
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 16
Bedford	Corn Exchange	Nov 17
Hull	City Hall	Nov 19
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 22

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 13

SIMON McBRIDE

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Nov 2
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 3
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 6
Hull	Fruit	Nov 7
London	Islington Academy	Nov 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 9
Ilfracombe	Blues Festival	Nov 11
Bristol	The Tunnels	Nov 13

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Halifax	Playhouse	Sep 23
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 5
St Helens	Citadel	Oct 6
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Oct 20
Inverness	Ironworks	Oct 21
Glasgow	ABC 2	Oct 22
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 27
Keighley	The Octagon	Oct 28
Bristol	The Tunnels	Dec 10
Derby	Flowerpot	Dec 14
Barton-upon-Humber	Ropery Hall	Dec 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 16

THE PAT McMANUS BAND

Keady	Arthur's Bar	Oct 20
Omagh	Weigh Inn	Oct 21
Skerries	Raffs On The Corner	Oct 29
Swords	Carnegie Court Hotel	Nov 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 9
Nottingham	Doghouse	Nov 10
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	Nov 11
Chislehurst	Beaverwood	Club Nov 14

THE MELVINS, RED KROSS

Bristol	Exchange	Oct 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 10
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 11
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 12
Birmingham	Institute 2	Oct 13
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 31

METALLICA, KVELERTAK

London	O2 Arena	Oct 22, 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 26
Manchester	Arena	Oct 28
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Oct 30

IAN MOSS

London	Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen	Oct 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 5
Stratford-upon-Avon	Arthouse	Oct 8

MOTORPSYCHO

London	Islington Academy	Oct 23

MOUNT HOLLY

London	King's Cross Water Rats	Oct 18
Mansfield	Old Library	Oct 21

MR. BIG, THE ANSWER, FASTER PUSSYCAT

Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 16
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 19
Manchester	Academy	Nov 21
Glasgow	ABC	Nov 22
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Nov 23

NAZARETH

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 13
Norwich	UEA	Oct 14

NEW FOUND GLORY

Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 20
Oxford	Academy	Sep 21
Norwich	UEA	Sep 22
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 23
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Sep 25
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 28
Manchester	Academy	Sep 29
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 30
Leeds	Academy	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 3
Bristol	Academy	Oct 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 7
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 8

OPETH, ENSLAVED

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 15
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 16
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 17
Dublin	Academy	Nov 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 19
Bristol	Academy	Nov 21
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 22

PAPA ROACH

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 6
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 7
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 11

PARADISE LOST, PALLBEARER

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 3

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF

London	Malet Street ULU	Sep 16
Bristol	Bierkeller	Sep 17

THE PRETENDERS

Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 30
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 1
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 3
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 4
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 8
Brighton	Dome	Oct 10
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 11
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 14
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 17
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 18

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 26
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Nov 28
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 30
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 1
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 3
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 6
Sheffield	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
Manchester	Arena	Dec 9
London	O2 Arena	Dec 12
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 15

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

London	Wembley Arena	Nov 18
Manchester	Arena	Nov 19
London	O2 Arena	Nov 21
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 24

THE RAVEN AGE

Glasgow	The Garage	Oct 23
Manchester	Star & Garter	Oct 24
Birmingham	Institute 3	Oct 25
London	Boston Music Rooms	Oct 26
Bristol	Louisiana	Oct 28

KEVIN NIXON

Dublin	Academy 2	Oct 30
Belfast	Limelight 2	Oct 31

THE RASMUS, KLOGR

London	King's Cross Scala	Nov 19

CHRIS REA

Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 20
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 23
Harrogate	International Centre	Nov 25
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 27, 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Dec 1
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 3
Sheffield	City Hall	Dec 5
Belfast	Waterfront	Dec 8
Oxford	New Theatre	Dec 10
Brighton	Centre	Dec 11
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 13

RISE AGAINST

Birmingham	Academy	Nov 1
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 2
Leeds	Academy	Nov 4
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 5
Dublin	Academy	Nov 6
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 8

ROCKINGHAM FESTIVAL
VINCE NEIL, LOVERBOY, MORE

Nottingham	Trent University	Oct 20-22

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER, HAND OF DIMES

London	Manette Street Borderline	Nov 3
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 4

ROYAL BLOOD, AT THE DRIVE IN

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 13
Reading	Rivermead Centre	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 17
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 18
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 20-22
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 24
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 25
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 26
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 28
Brighton	Centre	Nov 29

SAINT VITUS, MOS GENERATOR, POSEIDON

London	Camden Underworld	Oct 1

MICHAEL SCHENKER FEST, DEPARTED

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 2
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 4
Hull	City Hall	Nov 5

SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

South Shields	The Unionist	Nov 9
Bewdley	St George's Hall	Nov 10
Tenby	Blues Fest	Nov 11
Bristol	Louisiana	Nov 12
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Nov 17
Winchester	Railway Inn	Nov 18
London	Putney Half Moon	Jan 16
Skegness	Blues Weekend	Jan 19
St Helens	Citadel	Jan 20

SEETHER

London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 16
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 17
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 18

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, DAN PATLANSKY

Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 7
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 9
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 10
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 12
Bristol	Colston Hall	Nov 14
London	Royal Festival Hall	Nov 15
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 20

SHELLAC

Galway	Roisin Dubh	Sep 29
Dublin	Tivol	Sep 30
Belfast	Black Box	Oct 1
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 3
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 4
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 5
Birmingham	Asylum	Oct 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Oct 7
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 9
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 10

SPARKS

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 18
Newcastle	Boiler Room	Sep 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Sep 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 23

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

DEEP PURPLE

KEVIN NIXON

Never seen them before? Don't let one of rock's legendary bands finish their final tour and then kick yourself for not saying goodbye.

See page 111 for dates, currently Nov 17-23.

Birmingham	Institute	Sep 24
Bristol	Academy	Sep 26
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 27, 28

STATUS QUO

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 26
Sheffield	City Hall	Nov 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 29
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 30
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 2
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 3
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Dec 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 6
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 8

STONE SOUR, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 29
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 30
Brighton	Centre	Dec 1
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 4, 6
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 8

STRAY

London	Manette Street Borderline	Oct 20

SUMMER'S END FESTIVAL
FROST*, THE TANGENT, SOUTHERN EMPIRE, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Oct 6-8

SUPERSUCKERS

Brighton	Patterns	Oct 8
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Oct 9
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 10
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Oct 11
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 12
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 15

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 6
York	The Crescent	Nov 7
Hull	Fruit	Nov 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 9
Leicester	Dryden Street Social	Nov 11
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Nov 12
Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	Nov 14
Plymouth	The Hub	Nov 15
Brighton	The Haunt	Nov 16
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 19
London	Manette Street Borderline	Nov 20
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 21
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 24

THRESHOLD, DAMNATION ANGELS, DAY SIX

London	Islington Academy	Dec 10

TIGERTAILZ

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 16

TOUCHSTONE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Prog	Nov 18
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 25

TRAIN

Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 16
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 19
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 20
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 21
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 23

WALTER TROUT, SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 9
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 10, 11
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Oct 13
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Oct 14
Preston	Guildhall	Oct 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 17
Harpenden	Public Hall	Oct 18
Bristol	Bierkeller Theatre	Oct 20
Swansea	Sin City	Oct 21
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Oct 22

ROBIN TOWER

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 29

THE TUBES

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 4
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 5
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 6
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 9
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Nov 10

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Banbury	The Mill	Sep 15
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Sep 16
Oswestry	Lions Quays Hotel	Sep 17
Hull	City Space	Sep 22
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Sep 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 4
Runcorn	The Brindley	Oct 5
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 6
Worthing	Pier	Oct 12
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Oct 13
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 20
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 21
Birmingham	St Paul's	Oct 26
Hockley	Touchline Live	Oct 27
Haverhill	Arts Centre	Oct 28
Wokingham	Music Club	Nov 3

TYKETTO

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 12
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Nov 13
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 24
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Nov 25
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 26

JUDIE TZUKE

Castle Douglas	CatStrand Arts Centre	Sep 28
Greenock	Albany Theatre	Sep 29
Kinross	Green Hotel	Sep 30
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 1
Teddington	Landmark Arts Centre	Oct 5
Goostrey	Goosfest	Oct 21
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 29
Great Torrington	Plough Arts Centre	Nov 11
Dartmouth	The Flavel	Nov 12
Norwich	St Andrews Hall	Nov 16
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Nov 17

Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 18

UFO

Southampton	The Brook	Sep 12
Dorking	Dorking Halls	Sep 14
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 15
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 16

FOY VANCE

Manchester	RNCM	Oct 28
Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Oct 29, 30
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 31
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Nov 2-4

Recommended

STEVEN VAN ZANDT

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 4
Bristol	Academy	Nov 6
Leeds	Academy	Nov 8
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 10
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 12
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 14
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 16

TO BE RETAINED   ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

VEGA

Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 21
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 22
London	Malet Street ULU	Sep 23
Manchester	Academy	Sep 28
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 29
Sheffield	The Foundry	Sep 30

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Nov 6
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 7
Newcastle	Think Tank	Nov 9
Glasgow	G2	Nov 10
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 11
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 12
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Nov 14
Southampton	Talking Heads	Nov 15
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 16
Pwllheli	HRH Prog 6	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 18

VOODOO SIX

Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 16
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Sep 22
Glasgow	Cathouse	Sep 23
Southampton	Talking Heads	Sep 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Sep 29
Swansea	Garage	Sep 30

W.A.S.P.

Hastings	White Rock Pavilion	Oct 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 13
Leeds	Academy	Oct 14
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 15
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 16
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 18
Dublin	Academy	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 22
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 22
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 24
Bristol	Academy	Oct 25
Norwich	UEA	Oct 26
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 27

WHITBY BLUES FESTIVAL
BERNIE MARSDEN, DR FEELGOOD, DANNY BRYANT, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 14

WINTER STORM FESTIVAL
TYKETTO, HEAVY PETTIN', ROCK GODDESS, MORE

Troon	Ayrshire Innovation Centre	Nov 24, 25

WOLFSBANE

Winchester	The Railway	Dec 15
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Dec 16
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 17
London	Islington Academy	Dec 21
Pontypool	The Dragonfly	Dec 22
Bolton	Bar Metro Rocks	Dec 23

ANDREW W.K.

Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Nov 9
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 10
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 11
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 13
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 15

LIVE!

Megadeth

Bloodstock Open Air, Catton Hall, Derbyshire

After years of ups and downs playing live, the thrash pioneers are back in startling form.

Megadeth still make a gloriously apocalyptic racket.

'This much is certain: Megadeth have got their mojo back.'

★ Lit from behind with a powerful spotlight, Dave Mustaine is totally rocking that big-haired Bonnie Tyler look as he yanks another skin-flaying speed-punk solo from his guitar. The super-sized screen behind him belches lurid visions of blazing street riots, nuclear explosions, alien autopsies, terrorist atrocities, robot death squads and 50 shades of alt.right conspiracy theory. The fun just never ends. After more than 30 years of surges and slumps, feuds and fall-outs, Megadeth find themselves uncannily in tune with the zeitgeist in 2017.

Headlining Bloodstock Open Air festival, Megadeth are unloading their full, multi-megaton payload on to a leafy corner of rural Derbyshire – with agreeably cataclysmic consequences. While some of the band's more recent tours have felt perfunctory, they appear to be back on meaty and muscular form here. The rhythm guitar has real crunch and punch, the booming twin bass drums sound cavernously huge, the visuals are gloriously gaudy without swamping the songs.

Fresh blood has clearly been a factor in Megadeth's current rude health. After multiple personnel changes, these all-American thrash pioneers are more of an international coalition nowadays. Last year Mustaine and long-standing bass guitarist David Ellefson were joined by Brazilian guitar virtuoso Kiko Loureiro and Belgian drummer Dirk Verberuren. Both feel like vital forces at Bloodstock, shredding and pounding the guts out of *Hangar 18* and *Wake Up Dead*. Some long-time fans even claim this is the band's best line-up since their fabled Nick Menza/Marty Freidman era. Which is arguable, but this much is certain: Megadeth have got their mojo back.

Dave Mustaine: more mellow these days but still opinionated.

Two hours earlier, backstage at Bloodstock, the Megadeth compound hums with a businesslike calm. Fenced off from the rest of the VIP zone, the band's circle of cabins includes a separate practice room, management office and, in the dressing room, a rack of four luxuriant dressing gowns in tasteful dark grey. Such are the small but significant status signifiers of a multi-platinum festival headliner.

Dave Mustaine is in a buoyant mood. This is partly, he explains, because Megadeth now have much more harmonious management and band members than they did two years ago. Indeed his loathing for ex-managers and their Machiavellian misdeeds becomes something of a recurring motif in our chat.

But Mustaine's temperament is generally cheery as Megadeth bask in a sustained critical and commercial resurgence. "It's been longer than I thought it would be and better than I imagined," he says. "My mind's blown, honestly."

Released in early 2016, Megadeth's fifteenth studio album, *Dystopia*, received some of their best reviews and highest chart positions in more than 20 years, peaking at No.3 in the US *Billboard* chart and No.11 in the UK.

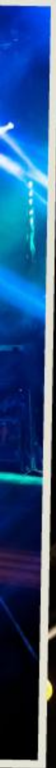
> **"I know people don't like me, I also know a lot of people do."**
>
> **Dave Mustaine**

"It's important", Mustaine says, grinning. "People who say charts aren't important don't ever get high up in the charts, ha! If they were up in the Top 10 it would be fucking important. So having been up there for most of my career, it's important."

In January this year, *Dystopia*'s title track earned Megadeth their first ever Grammy after a dozen unsuccessful nominations. Never overly troubled by modesty, Mustaine feels the accolade was long overdue. "That's such a bummer, when people used to come up and say: 'Hey, man, tough luck about the Grammy.' Well tough luck about you, motherfucker! Did you get nominated?"

Mustaine is half-joking here, playing up to his prickly public persona. He may have a reputation for being combative in interviews and making contentious statements, but at Bloodstock he seems genial and relaxed. "I know people don't like me, I also know a lot of people do," he shrugs. "And the ones who don't like me, I'm not going to say: 'Fuck you', I'm just going to say: 'Fuck you for now.' Ha!"

Mustaine has admitted he was an "arrogant asshole" in his youth, but perhaps he is mellowing at the ripe old age 55?



Mustaine yanks another skin-flaying speed-punk solo from his guitar.

"I don't know if 'mellowing' is the word," he says, "it's more being able to take perspective of what's going on," he muses. "Me and David Ellefson, it was us against the world. A lot of times I look back at the behaviour I had to do, and if it wasn't survival mechanisms and I didn't have to fight for myself, I imagine at least fifty per cent of that behaviour would never have occurred. But if you put a snake in your backyard you can't expect it to only bite your neighbours."

With its feverish visions of political strife and impending civil war, *Dystopia* sounds like an album that was tailor-made for the Trump era. But of course the album was written and recorded long before last year's elections. In fairness, Mustaine has written apocalyptic albums under other presidents, and he was careful to avoid publicly endorsing any candidate. But he does concede that Megadeth seem to enjoy greater success during turbulent, divided times.

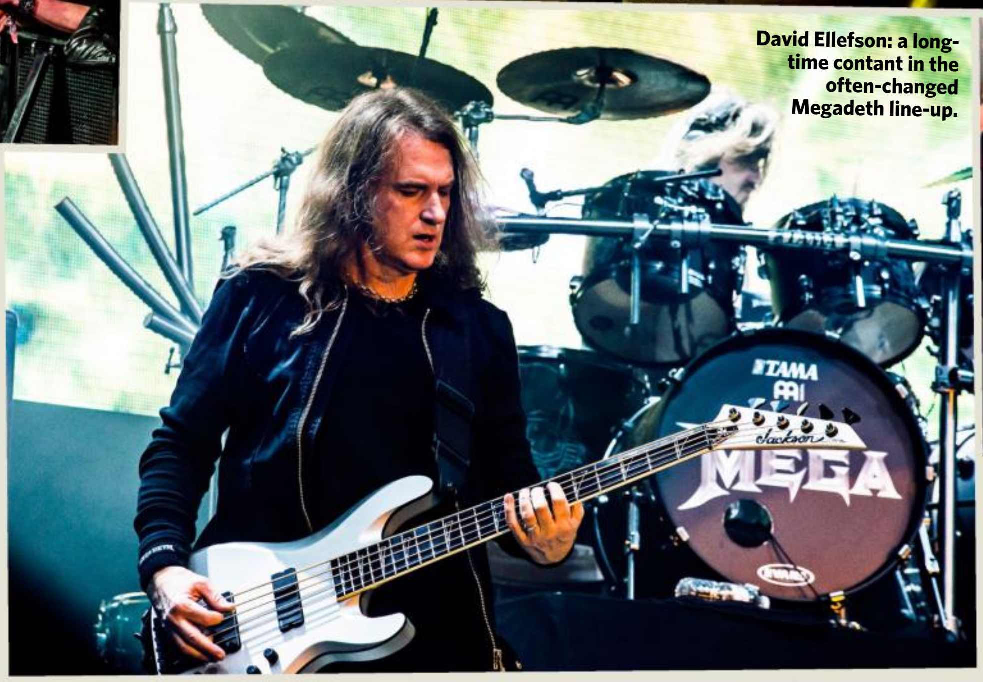
"I think the music has a way of being popular during periods of chaos and confusion" he nods. "Because people kind of go to it with the safety of knowing there's a lock on the door. There are certain things people want to hear in the background, they just want to feel comfortable."

Megadeth have a strong religious hinterland which sits a little oddly with the profanity and nihilism of thrash metal. Ellefson is a pastor in Arizona, while Mustaine's born-again Christian faith has led him to make problematic statements over the years. He no longer plays certain songs that flirt with satanic imagery, but he denies that religion has had a strong effect on his general outlook.

"Not to the extent people make it out to be," he insists. "There are certain things I believe in that are part of my faith and I'd rather not get into it because that's what the faith is, and people who have a problem with that can take it up with God. As far as me telling you that you are wrong, I don't do that, I would never do that. But if there is something said in the songs, like for example the Sex Pistols song we used to do, the first line says: '*I am an Antichrist…*' I am *not* an Antichrist, I never have been. I didn't even know what it was, I just thought it was a kind of a cool word, you know?"

Nowadays, at least Mustaine has God on his side. Shortly before before taking the stage as

New drummer Dirk Verberuren delivers the power.



David Ellefson: a long-time contant in the often-changed Megadeth line-up.

Bloodstock, as they do at every show, Megadeth form a circle and say a simple group prayer to shelter them from evil. Partly in response to horrific events like the shooting of Dimebag Darrell and the Bataclan massacre in Paris, Mustaine describes this group hug as more lucky charm than religious rite.

"It's not a ritual, it's a routine," he insists. "We're not doing this as a religious thing, we are doing it more for a request for us to all be protected, you included. Whether people want that or not."

Fast-forward to the show, and Mustaine is headbanging like a man possessed. While never a particularly dynamic frontman, he does appear more mobile at Bloodstock than in recent years, prowling the full width of the stage and striking messianic poses in the blinding spotlights. During the snarly *Dystopia* song *The Threat Is Real*, he stands in formation with Ellefson and Loureiro for some vigorous synchronised moshing. For a man who suffered a neck injury five years ago which almost ended his career, there is something admirable about this demented display.

"In 2012 I fused my neck together, couldn't play for seventeen months," Mustaine told me before the show. "Doctors said I would never play guitar again. So I said fuck you, got on the plane in Texas, flew back to Arizona where I lived, and saw a different doctor. The work was hard, but I got it back, because I was determined. Nobody's going to tell me I'm not going to do something. Am I a hundred per cent back? I think so."

"In 2012, doctors said I would never play guitar again."
Dave Mustaine

To be frank, at 55, Mustaine's voice is no longer quite the powerhouse guttural demon-growl it once was, increasingly taking on more of the coarse-grained rasp of a gnarly old bluesman. This is not exactly a serious blemish on the music, but it does lend a striking new tone to Megadeth classics like *Sweating Bullets*, whose strolling jazzy rhythm and sandpaper vocal are tonight closer to Tom Waits than to James Hetfield. With its hard-rock energy diminished, the song's sheer oddness stands out, a stray cat strut with a spring-heeled bounce.

The twin highlights of the new album material at Bloodstock are probably the least thrash-centric tracks Megadeth have yet recorded. Both were co-written by Loureiro, and both are fine showcases for his skills. The instrumental *Conquer Or Die!* is a sensual mood piece couched in luscious classical finger-picking on a nylon-stringed acoustic guitar, while *Poisonous Shadows* is a florid epic of cinematic proportions, all towering choral fanfares and exotic tonal shifts; Megadeth finally have their *Kashmir*.

If Megadeth feel musically refreshed, Loureiro and Verbeuren are clearly vital to the band's new formula. "They're good guys, better players," Mustaine tells me. "Without taking anything away from the players in the past – and I've had so many great players in the past, I wouldn't have picked them if

"Thank you Bloodstock, and goodnight..." and a job well done.

Megadeth 2017: (l-r) Dirk Verberuren Dave Mustaine, David Ellefson, Kiko Loureiro.

they weren't. But these guys are so true to what I think is the legacy of the music."

Midway through their Bloodstock set, Megadeth drift into chugging autopilot a little with *Trust* and *A Tout Le Monde*, 90s riff-grinders which once had a hard-edged, pop-thrash bite but which now come across as a little anodyne. Melodic and mainstream were never Mustaine's best looks.

But they rally again with *Mechanix*, a punky slammer that dates back to Mustaine's traumatic apprenticeship with Metallica, and the anthemic bombast of *Dystopia* itself. The accompanying animated video features the band's skull-faced icon Vic Rattlebag in a *Terminator*-like battle between humans and machines. In both sound and look, it locates Megadeth firmly in Iron Maiden territory, a connection that may not be wholly accidental. Megadeth and Maiden have a friendship stretching back decades, and have even discussed plans for a major world tour together.

"I just saw Steve Harris down in Spain," Mustaine tells me before the show. "People don't know this, but Steve and I spoke the night that I lost my job in Metallica. When we were in New Jersey, he came to watch us play with Vandenberg and The Rods because he had heard about us and wanted to see what it was all about. It was so neat to see him there. It reminds me of times when I'm a fly on the wall in clubs."

Megadeth round off Bloodstock with *Symphony Of Destruction*, a vintage crowd pleaser which sounds as head-explodingly pugnacious as ever. The screen blazes with dramatic footage of crooked politicians, violent street riots, stars-and-striped flags in flames. Both song and video are 25 years old, but both could have been released last week. This the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a sustained barrage of eyebrow-scorching guitar solos.

Mustaine has attracted mockery and derision over the decades, some of it deserved, but the lion's share of this show is charged with the kind of visceral, elemental, primal energy that never dates. Punk-metal intensity on a stadium scale. Love them or loathe them, Megadeth still make a gloriously apocalyptic racket.

Words: **Stephen Dalton** Photos **Will Ireland**

Lionize

London Black Heart

Nuclear soul from the Maryland mavericks.

'Lionize are a soul band in rock band clothes – gold lamé ones at that.'

With his tight-fitting gold lamé T-shirt and matching trousers, Lionize frontman Nathan Bergman looks like a superstar schlub. He's not a big guy, stocky maybe, but the tiny stage at the Black Heart pub barely contains him. It certainly can't hold his voice – one part warthog bellow, one part raging croon.

American band Lionize share plenty of similarities with Clutch, their big-brother band from back home in Maryland. It's there in the taut grooves, the sandpaper-and-honey sonics, their propensity to throw in the odd funky drum break. But they dig deeper and go further back too: the warm growl of a Hammond XK5 organ lends a vintage sound to their songs, even at their most bludgeoning.

Bergman is without doubt the stone-cold star of the show, unafraid to peel off some classic rock guitar heroics, complete with classic rock guitar hero moves and shapes. There's a glint of madness in his eyes – '*Don't trust our government*,' he sings repeatedly at one point – but there's also a streak of emotion a mile wide, not least on the epic blowout *Ain't That A Shame*.

Lionize say reggae is a big influence on their brand of rock'n'roll, but on listening to them you'd be hard-pushed to hear it. What they are, in all their raw, ragged glory, is a soul band in rock band clothes – gold lamé ones at that.

Dave Everley

Gold standard: Lionize's Nathan Bergman.

Bad Religion

Bristol Academy

Popcore stalwarts persist in preaching SoCal's punk gospel

Bundle it into a sack, weigh it down with stones and lob it into the canal, but the indestructible zombie corpse of punk rock stubbornly refuses to die.

Seeing Bad Religion in 2017, almost 40 years since they formed at high school, is a reminder of how exhilarating that two-minute, three-chord, four-letter formula can still be – but also how limiting. While abrasive, politically charged rock genres have evolved and multiplied, these melodic West Coast punk-pop pioneers remain metaphorically stuck in their garage, ranting against parents and politicians and authority figures in an increasingly ironic suburban-dad manner.

Bad Religion may sound more like The Monkees than the Pistols nowadays, but one key saving grace is Greg Graffin's wry stage patter; he dedicates *Fuck You* to all the purists who accuse him of being "not punk enough, too old, too fat". The band also have a cluster of classic power-pop anthems, detonating moshpit frenzy with the caveman chant *21st Century (Digital Boy)*, the stupidly infectious *Punk Rock Song* and the apocalyptic epic *Los Angeles Is Burning*.

Graffin and co. can clearly do this kind of rabble-rousing shtick with ease. But as founding fathers of SoCal punk, they should also feel secure enough to move outside their comfort zone occasionally, adding a little depth and diversity to these samey juvenile riff-slammers.

Stephen Dalton

Radio Moscow / Ken Pustelnik's Groundhogs

London The Borderline

Meanwhile, in Soho, 1970 refuses to die.

"*Thank Christ For The Bomb* is a great album," says Chris D'avoine, frontman of this version of The Groundhogs. "Which I can say because I'm not on it." With three-quarters of the line-up having no connection with the band's glory years, and none of them being Tony McPhee – only drummer Ken Pustelnik, who looks like a miniature version of Christopher Lee, played on their best records – you'd be forgiven for not expecting much from this support slot. And you'd be wrong. D'avoine is a manic presence, bass player Latch Manghat a whirl of swirling dreads and blurred fingers, and crushing versions of *Soldier*, *Eccentric Man* and *Spilt, Part One* rattle the venue's newly refurbished rafters.

Radio Moscow don't fare so well. The relentless, churning attack that makes their records so dramatic feels one-dimensional when the volume's ramped up and the sharp tang of sweat stings the nostrils. And while opener *Broke Down* is a vibrant, spinning mass of Sabbath riffs and rattling toms, light and shade is only applied an hour later, during the slow blues of *Deep Blue Sea*. This encore also provides an unintentionally comical climax, as bass player Anthony Meier stands alone on stage, hitting his Rickenbacker against an amp to attract the attention of his bandmates, who remain in the dressing room, apparently unaware that they're required back on stage.

Fraser Lewry

Fairport Convention

Cropredy Convention, Oxfordshire

Come all ye rollin' minstrels – Fairport hit a half-century.

It must be a *bit* special if Robert Plant's here. Joe Brown, Danny Thompson and some other famous faces are also in attendance this weekend, celebrating 50 years of folk rock's first family at their own 20,000-strong festival in a field near Banbury.

The current Convention (Simon Nicol, Dave Pegg, Gerry Conway, Ric Sanders and Chris Leslie) bookend a three-hour Saturday night headline slot with interludes that start with a rip-snorting set from the 'Fairport Toddlers'. Nicol lines up beside Richard Thompson, Ashley Hutchings, Dave Mattacks, Ian Matthews and Judy Dyble, and the teen-era band fire up *Time Will Show The Wiser* and a jamtastic *Reno, Nevada* complete with traditional dishcloth knitting by Dyble. Eccentric and exhilarating, we'd like to see a full set by this super-rare assemblage again, please.

Soon, further incarnations resurrect and regenerate: Chris While handles Sandy Denny's sublime parts on *Come All Ye* and *Who Knows Where The Time Goes*; PJ Wright and Sally Barker gently flutter Fotheringay's flag with Maartin Allcock; Ralph McTell is resonant and assured on *Wedding Dress* (and more).

By the 142(ish) verses of *Matty Groves*, the stage is getting rather full, and then there's The Big One to unite the whole field and all members and guests present: the simply wonderful *Meet On The Ledge*. Touching, evocative and *more* than a bit special.

Jo Kendall

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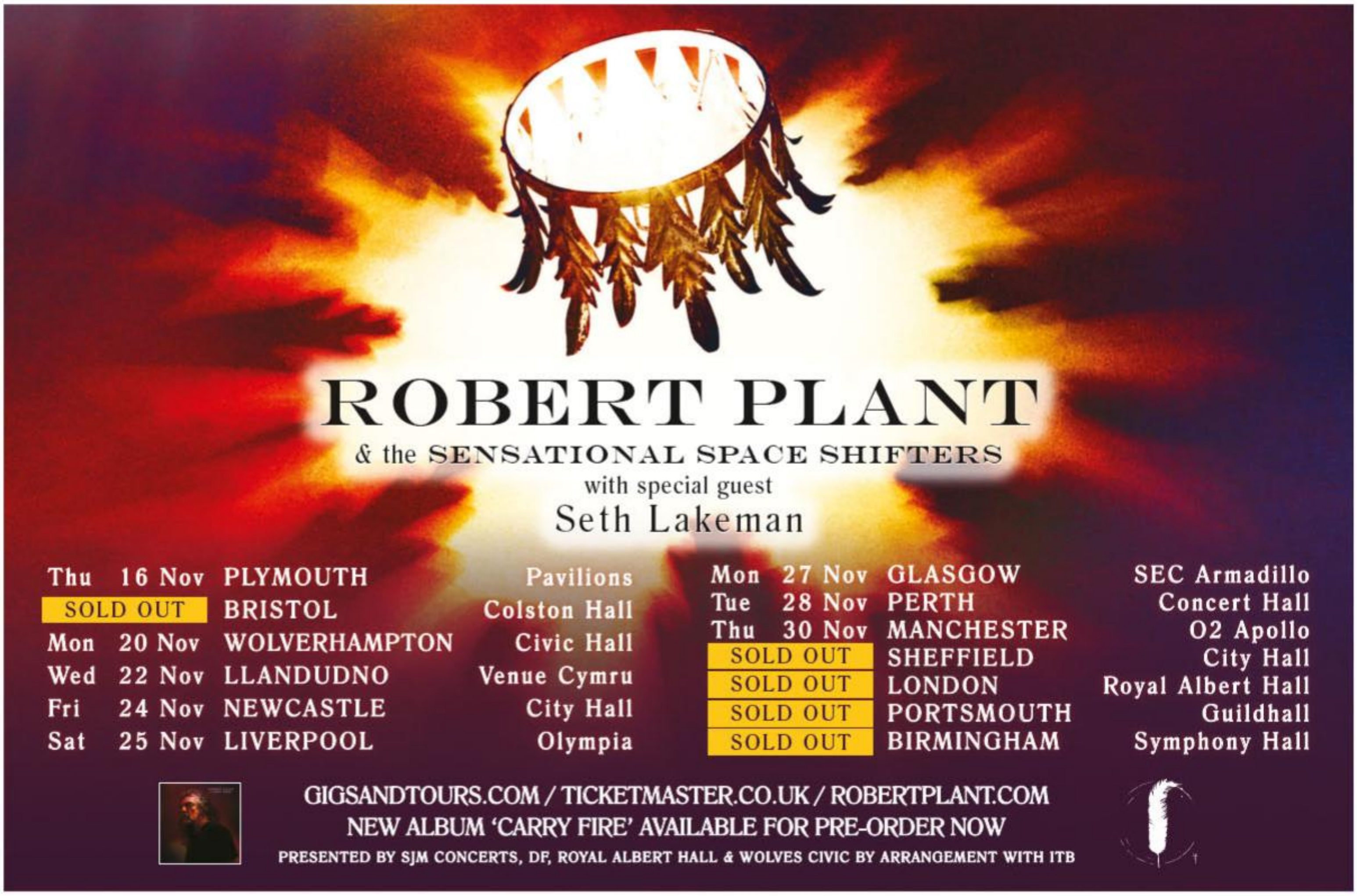

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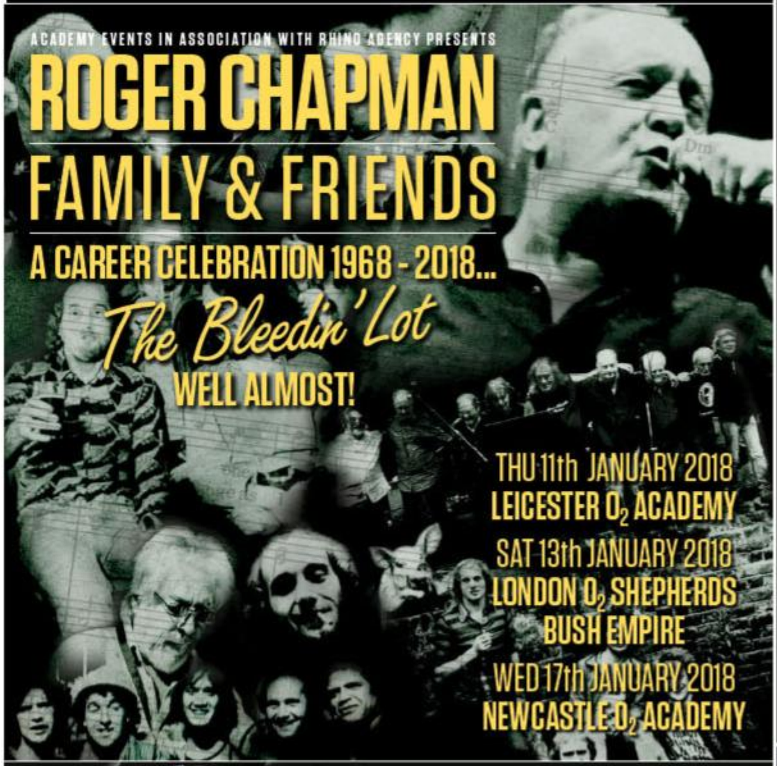

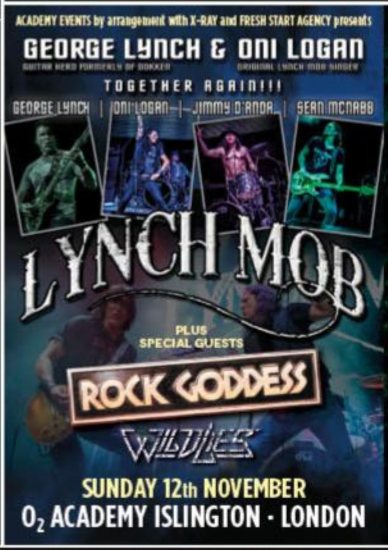

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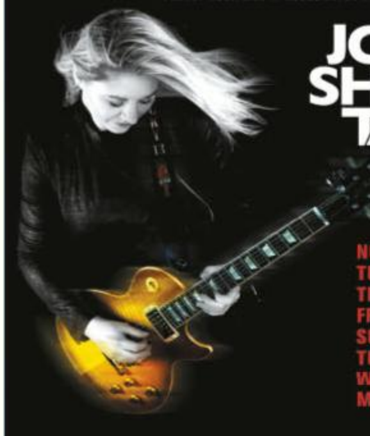

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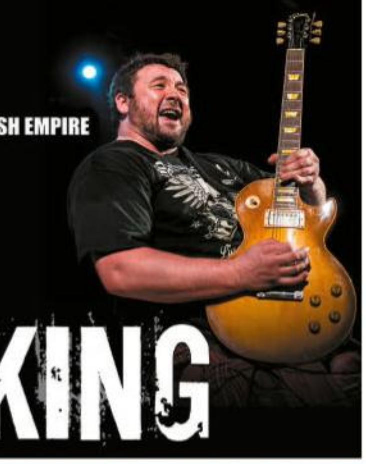

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Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Orange Goblin's **Ben Ward** on being a pro footballer, a boozy past and being "a horrible bastard" at times.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

Since forming Orange Goblin in 1995, Ben Ward – all six feet five inches of him – has steadily built a reputation as one of rock's most exuberant frontmen. Fresh from a hectic weekend spent bellowing more than 700,000 punters into abject submission at Germany's Wacken and Poland's gigantic free Woodstock festivals, the surprisingly 'shy and retiring' leviathan reveals that, pierced arse or not, football's loss was metal's gain.

What's the most damage you've inflicted on stage?
I've fallen off stage and done myself damage. At a festival in Germany I was given a pill just before going on stage, and halfway through our set I started to come up. I got too close to the edge of the stage, fell into the crowd on to the mic stand and pierced a hole in my arse. I thought someone had stabbed me, so got back on stage, told the band to stop playing and said: "Get security, I've been stabbed." The band had to point out that no one had stabbed me, I'd actually fallen on my own mic stand, causing myself serious arse injury.

What's the biggest public misconception about you?
People think I am how I appear on stage: a large, overbearing, confident frontman type. But when off stage I can be quite shy, retiring and like to be left alone.

What are the best and worst drugs you've taken?
Alcohol's the answer to both. It gave me some of my best times and a lot of the worst. I've been to some dark places with booze in the past. Particularly in my early twenties when I was on the brink of alcoholism. I've got a lid on it now. Last year I had a self-imposed ban, two months without a drop. I never thought it possible to do an Orange Goblin tour sober, but I proved myself wrong.

What's your biggest regret?
Most boys harbour ambitions to play professional football or front a rock band, and I've been fortunate enough to do both. When I left school I played football for two years at Queens Park Rangers. I had a good couple of years, but during that time I discovered heavy metal, booze and drugs, so football fell by the wayside. For the last twenty-two years I've can't say I regret anything.

Have you ever been stalked?
It's weird seeing Orange Goblin tattoos. There's one guy in particular, who's the proud owner of a huge chest-piece with all four of our faces in immaculate detail. When he posted it online it was like an Alan Partridge moment.

I can't say I've been stalked. Orange Goblin don't attract groupies or stalkers. Most of our fans are overweight, bearded, sweaty metalheads. We don't really appeal to bunny boilers.

What's the least glamorous location you've ever found yourself in while on the road?
A pub called the Axe And Cleaver in Boston, Lincolnshire, one of those really rough English dock towns full of stevedores and seamen. You didn't want to say a word out of turn or you'd risk a proper right-hander. In Bozeman, Montana the show catering was the antelope the promoter had shot that morning.

"I fell into the crowd on to my own mic stand and pierced a hole in my arse."

What were you like at school?
I was what Americans refer to as a jock. I've always been tall, so I was always picked for the school football team, school basketball team and I was pretty decent at cricket. I went to grammar school, did alright in my GCSEs, but as soon as I left school I went to play football. I was planning to study electrical engineering and be an engineer in the RAF.

Where do you stand politically?
My grandad was a miner, and my uncle. I remember him being arrested during the miners' strike. He had to leave our family home in Kent when they closed the pits and move to Yorkshire to work at Selby, so we're traditionally Labour in my family. But I think they're all crooks, no matter what their political leanings; lying, cheating toe-rags out to benefit themselves rather than the people they claim to speak for.

What in your life are you most proud of?
I've got a sixteen-year old son who is very intelligent, doing very well at school, very good at everything he does. He's turning into a bright, funny, polite young man and I'm very proud of him and the way he's been brought up. I'm proud of the band and what I've got in life. I don't really have anything to complain about, I'm quite comfortable.

A man of your stature could get away with being a horrible bastard. Ever been tempted to exploit your physical being for nefarious ends?
When I have too many I've been known to turn into a horrible bastard, and probably a bit of a bully because of my size, and I'm not proud of that. There've been times when I've had to apologise to a lot of people the day after a night out.

What will be written on your tombstone?
I've had a decent innings, I'm a nice enough bloke, so hopefully nothing too horrible's going to be written about me.

Orange Goblin play HardRockHell's Doom vs Stoner at Sheffield O2 Academy on September 30. They have a new album due in 2018.

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